

# THE REUNIFICATION DEBATE IN BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

THE ROLE OF FRENCH CAMEROON IMMIGRANTS



Joseph Lon Nfi

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# The Reunification Debate in British Southern Cameroons: The Role of French Cameroon Immigrants

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## Acknowledgement

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This book is the outcome of a research work for the terminal degree started in 2008. The objective was to investigate the role “settlers” from French Cameroon played in the decolonisation politics of the British Southern Cameroons. Following a brilliant defence of the thesis and its contribution to historical knowledge, the jury headed by Professor Daniel Abwa of the University of Yaounde 1, recommended the publication of my findings and revelations.

The publication of this book has also been inspired by the planned celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the 1961 Reunification of the two Cameroons. In fact, October 1, 2011 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Reunification of Cameroon. It was on October 1, 1961 that the British Southern Cameroons reunified with *La République du Cameroun* (Former French Cameroon) to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

The Reunification of Cameroon remains the most significant event in the post-colonial history of Cameroon and several scholars have in their publications paid tribute to J.N. Foncha and Amadou Ahidjo and the indigenes of the Southern Cameroons in general as the architects of this Reunification. This book brings out the key role played by French Cameroon immigrants in the Reunification debate in the Southern Cameroon. It reveals that they initiated the idea, propagated it and converted many Southern Cameroonians to vote for reunification at the 1961 UN-organised plebiscite. I hope this book will be a major contribution to the understanding of the events that culminated in the Reunification of the two Cameroons in October 1961.

Of all the deep debts of gratitude incurred in writing this book, none is greater than that to Professor Emeritus V.G. Fanso my academic mentor who supervised my PhD thesis and accepted to read the first draft of this book. Professors Daniel

Abwa, Thierno Bah, Bongfen Chem-Langhee and Mathew Gwanfogbe encouraged me to venture in this direction. My colleagues of the Department of History, University of Buea offered constructive and sympathetic criticisms which influenced the style and structure of the book. I am also indebted to my dear wife, Mbuyongha Caroline Messii because she took off time to read some of my drafts and to cater for my emotional and physical needs when I was preparing the manuscript. To all these people and those I cannot mention here, I say thank you.

**Joseph Lon NFI**  
**March 2013**



## Foreword

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La tradition jusqu'ici respectée est de voir les intellectuels camerounais d'expression anglaise, communément appelés « anglophones », s'intéresser principalement dans leurs écrits au « problème anglophone ». Dans un article que j'ai eu à publier il y a quelques temps sur ce problème, j'ai pu recenser au moins une dizaine d'écrits réalisés par ces intellectuels camerounais et je suis arrivé à la conclusion qu'il fallait que d'autres intellectuels camerounais s'impliquent dans l'analyse de ce phénomène pour lui enlever son caractère biaisé.

Ce faisant, il a été aisé de faire deux constats en rapport avec ce problème. D'abord, il est absurde de voir des camerounais s'étriper sur la base des langues étrangères bien qu'officielles. En effet, quelle différence y-a-t-il entre un MBOUDA, camerounais « francophone » et un SANTA, camerounais « anglophones » et un SANTA, camerounais « anglophone » ? Ou encore entre un SAWA Douala camerounais « francophone » et un SAWA Bakweri camerounais « anglophone » ? La langue des autres ne devraient pas être une cause de discrimination entre les camerounais.

Le deuxième constat est le suivant : si pour certains camerounais le « problème anglophone » est une réalité irréfutable, pour d'autres, ce n'est qu'un « épouvantail politique » qu'agitent des politiciens en quête permanente de position de pouvoir.

Que Joseph LON NFI, un historien camerounais « anglophone » commente un ouvrage sur la place et le rôle joués par des camerounais « francophone » lors du débat, au Cameroun britannique, sur la réunification des deux Cameroun, est une grande avancée dans la connaissance de l'histoire du Cameroun. C'est dire que l'Histoire du Cameroun appartient à tous les historiens camerounais sans distinction de tribus ni d'appartenance linguistique. L'histoire du Cameroun

« francophone » peut bien être écrite par un Camerounais « anglophone » et réciproquement.

Joseph LON NFI démontre avec brio, dans cet ouvrage, que depuis le partage du Cameroun allemand entre Anglais et Français, les camerounais « francophones » immigrés au Cameroun britannique, n'ont eu de cesse de voir cette unité reconstituée, cette réunification se faire. Partie du Cameroun sous administration française sous l'obédience de l'UPC, idée de la réunification est en effet récupérée et disséminée parmi les autres camerounais de la Zone anglais par un immigré Douala du nom de Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue. Ainsi dès l'entame du processus de revendication de la réunification des deux Cameroun, et jusqu'à son aboutissement, les Cameroun francophones installés au Cameroun britannique y ont pris une part active.

Le mérite de cet ouvrage de Joseph LON NFI est de démontrer, comme d'autres avant lui, que la réunification des deux Cameroun est le patrimoine exclusif de tous les camerounais des deux rives du Mounjo. Nul n'a le droit de s'en prévaloir unique propriétaire. C'est pourquoi cet ouvrage est bon à lire.

**Prof Daniel Abwa**  
**March 2013**

## Introduction

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The contact between the peoples of Africa and European civilization greatly changed the phase of the African continent. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, almost all of Africa had been placed under European rule and domination. Africa was conquered and partitioned with such haste and dramatic recklessness that the process came to be styled “the scramble for Africa”. In the rush for ‘spheres of influence’ on the black continent, the Germans signed a treaty with the Duala chiefs along the Wouri estuary. This was the famous Germano-Duala Treaty of July 12, 1884 which officially placed the coast of Cameroon under German influence and control. A few years later, the Germans penetrated and explored the hinterland and annexed and or conquered the interior ethnic groups and thus created Cameroon<sup>1</sup>.

This Cameroon territory was settled by a multitude of ethnic groups. It was one of the most pluralistic in terms of indigenous African societies. These diverse ethnic groups were separated by polities, chiefdoms, languages, customs, geographical location and even religious differences. However, the polities, especially those in the interior, interacted among themselves and had some kind of diplomatic and trade relations<sup>2</sup>. Both unifying and separating forces therefore existed in the region before the Germans carved it into a political entity.

According to Chem-Langhëë and Njeuma, the Germans did very little to instil in the minds of the inhabitants of Cameroon “the spirit of Kamerunism, the notion of Kamerun

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<sup>1</sup> In this book, we shall consistently use the English spelling of Cameroon. However the German spelling (Kamerun) and the French spelling (Cameroun) may come up in quotations.

<sup>2</sup> For details see, P.N.Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Yaounde, Yaounde University Press, 1987.

citizenship or the idea of a common political destiny”<sup>3</sup>. However, the thirty-two years of German administration provided Cameroon with well-defined boundaries, which made it a single entity and gave its inhabitants the same system of administration, education, foreign language and culture. By the time German rule came to an abrupt end in February 1916, much progress had been made towards forging a national identity.

This was achieved through the socio-economic projects of the Germans. The German schools, trade companies like the Gesslschaft Nordwest-Kamerun and Gesellschaft Sud-Kamerun, German plantations along the coast and German mission stations brought together people from all regions and ethnic groups. As they studied, worked or worshipped together, they adopted a common culture and language, the German language. The roads, bridges, railways, navigable rivers and ports realized by the Germans redirected trade and facilitated the movement and integration of people, thus eliminating the human and natural barriers to political integration<sup>4</sup>.

The same western imperialism which resulted in the German occupation of Cameroon later shattered the fragile political integration of Cameroon in 1916. During the First World War, Anglo-French troops jointly defeated the German troops in Cameroon by February 1916. In March 1916, Brigadier-General Charles M. Dobell and General Joseph Aymerich partitioned the territory into British and French spheres.

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<sup>3</sup> B. Chem-Langhëë and M.Z. Njeuma, “The Pan-Kamerun Movement, 1949-1961” in N. Kofele-Kale (ed.), *An African Experiment in Nation building, the Bilingual Cameroon Republic since Reunification*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview press, 1980, p.26.

<sup>4</sup> For a detail study on the Germans in Cameroon, see, H.R. Rubin, *Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*, Yale, Yale University Press, 1968.

The British sphere consisted of two disjointed, narrow strips of territory in the West, stretching from Lake Chad to the Atlantic coast and bordering on Nigeria. It comprised about one-fifth of the total area and population of Cameroon. The French sphere consisted of the remaining four-fifths of the territory and population. In 1919 the Versailles Peace makers approved of this division and the League of Nations through Article 22 of its covenant gave the territories to Britain and France to administer as mandated territories of the League. British Cameroons and French Cameroon were administered as mandate B territories.

When the British took over their own section of Cameroon, they integrated it with Nigeria for reasons of administrative convenience. In fact, Article 9 of the Mandate Agreement gave the administering authorities full powers of administration and legislation over the territories. They could constitute the territory into customs, fiscal or administrative union with the adjacent territories under their sovereignty or control provided always that the measures adapted to that end (did) not infringe on the provisions of the mandate<sup>5</sup>. Britain therefore conveniently administered the British Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria. The British colonial administration passed the order-in-council of June 16, 1923, which reconstituted the Cameroons along lines of the famous Nigerian North-South Principle. The order-in-council divided British Cameroons into two. The Northern half was known as British Northern Cameroons while the southern portion was called the Cameroons Province. To distinguish it from the Northern Cameroons, the Cameroons province came to be called the Southern Cameroons. The Southern Cameroons was placed under the Lieutenant Governor of the Southern Nigerian province. He was assisted by a Resident in Buea who

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<sup>5</sup> D.E Gardinier, "The British in the Cameroons, 1919-1939" in P. Gifford and W.R. Louis (eds), *Britain and Germany in Africa*, London, Yale University Press, 1967, p.525.

was in turn assisted by District Officers in charge of the various administrative units into which the territory was divided.

The Anglo-French partition of Cameroon and the British administrative division of British Cameroons into Northern and Southern Cameroons were arbitrary decisions that created problems that have remained central in Cameroon history. One of the problems was the division of some ethnic groups and the consequent migration of populations across the Anglo-French boundary. During the mandate period or interwar years and after the Second World War, many people migrated from the French territory (French Cameroon) to the British territory (the Southern Cameroons).

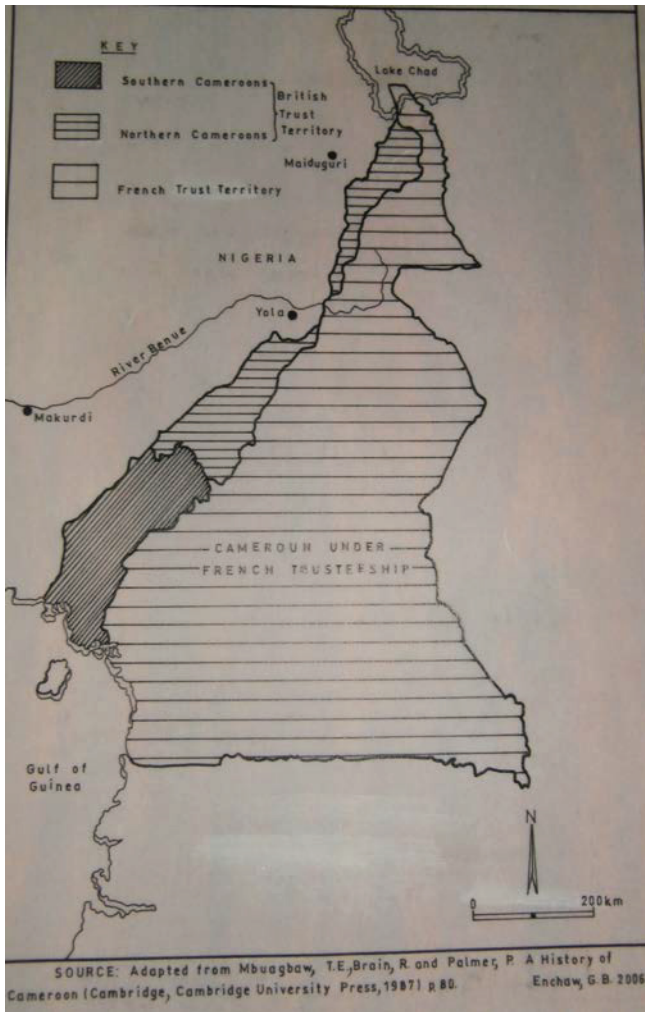
These immigrants from French Cameroon settled in various parts of the territory especially the economically advanced southern portion and participated in the socio-economic and political development of the Southern Cameroons. While in the Southern Cameroons, they created associations and pressure groups to help them, militated in political parties, participated in elections and constitutional conferences, petitioned the administering authorities of the UN trust territory and assumed influential political posts.

This research work focused on the participation and influence of French Cameroon immigrants in the politics of the Southern Cameroons between 1945 and 1961. This period was characterized by the rise of nationalism, the search for identity within Nigeria and the struggle for independence and reunification with French Cameroon.

The British Southern Cameroons had ethnic, historical, colonial and even geographical links with both the British colony of Nigeria and the French administered French Cameroon and had to choose either independence with Nigeria or independence with French Cameroon. Immigrants from French Cameroon played a key role in influencing the decisions of the political elite and masses during this very crucial period in the history of the Southern Cameroons.

In this study, French Cameroon immigrants refers to the inhabitants, peoples and settlers in the British Southern Cameroons between 1945 and 1961 whose birthplaces or homes of origin or ethnic bases were in French administered Cameroon. In 1951, Brigadier E.J. Gibbons the first Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons appointed in 1949, distinguished four categories of French Cameroon immigrants in the Southern Cameroons.

**Map 1: Cameroon Showing the 1916 Partition**



The first group comprised of permanent settlers. These were people born in the east of the Mungo River before 1916 or in the French administered territory after the 1916 Anglo-French partition of Cameroon who migrated for one reason or



another and settled permanently in the West of the Mungo River or in the British territory of the Southern Cameroons<sup>6</sup>.

The second category of French Cameroon immigrants was made up of the offspring of the permanent settlers who were either working or attending schools in the Southern Cameroons. Although born in the Southern Cameroons of French Cameroon parents, these youths were aware of their original home base and so maintained contact with their ethnic base.

The third Category was a floating population with ties on both sides of the Anglo-French boundary<sup>7</sup>. These were the Balong, Bakossi, Mbo, Bamileke, Tikar and Bamum who often crossed the newly established international boundary to visit their relations in the Southern Cameroons for social and cultural reasons.

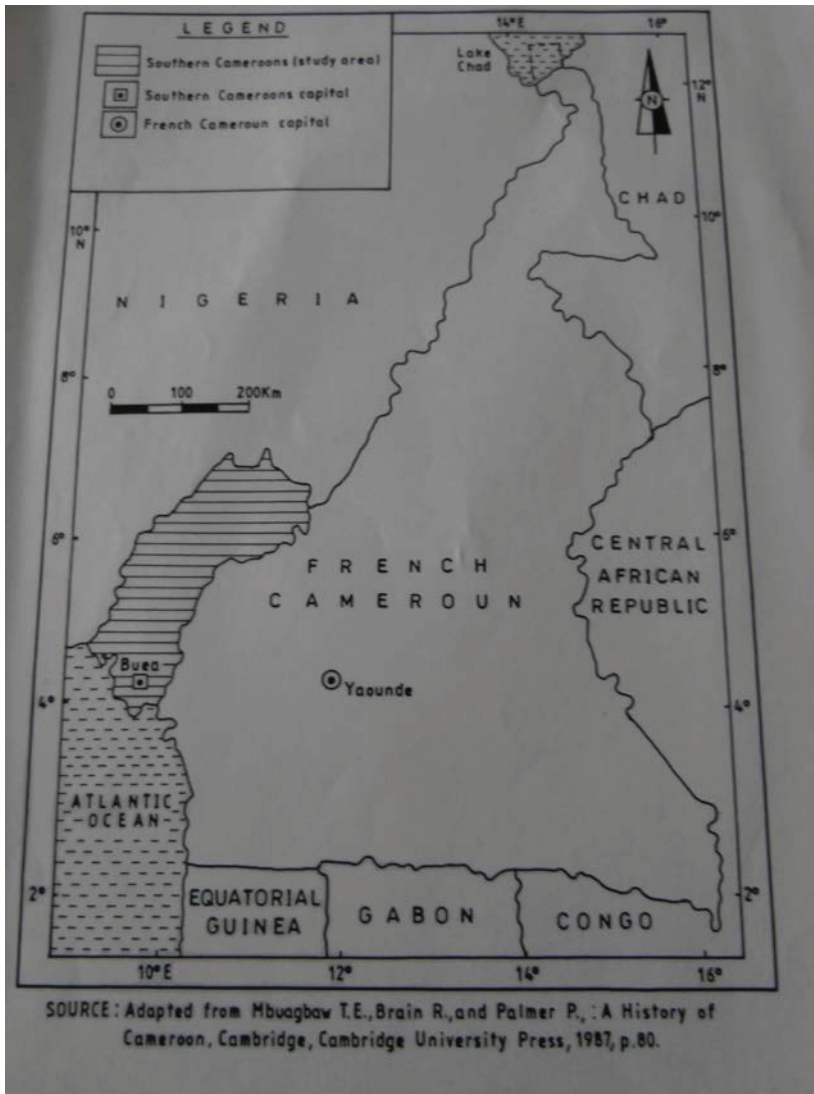
The fourth category was the temporary immigrants from French Cameroon who were job seekers, criminals, smugglers, traders, fishermen or refugees who moved into the Southern Cameroons. To this fourth category, and for the purpose of this study, can be added French Cameroonians who crossed to the Southern Cameroons to take part in political meetings, Campaigns, rallies and or elections. In essence, this study included all French Cameroonians whose activities in and out of the Southern Cameroons influenced the political development of the territory during this period.

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<sup>6</sup> E.Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism in the Southern Cameroons", PhD Thesis in History, University of California, 1982, p. 422.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 423.

Map 2: Cameroon Showing Study Area



For the purpose of this study, we have decided to call the territory the Southern Cameroons although it was only in 1957 that the appellation was constitutionally recognized. It is this territory which was in the 1920s and 1930s called the Cameroons province and which became a “Quasi-Federal

Territory” in 1954. It later became known as West Cameroon when it unified with the Republic of Cameroon in 1961. In 1972, the territory became the South West and North West Provinces of the United Republic of Cameroon. From 2009, these provinces became the North West and South West Regions of the Republic of Cameroon.

The study begins in 1945 and ends in 1961. The year 1945 marked the rise of nationalism and the struggle for independence in Africa generally and the Southern Cameroons in particular. The area of study, the Southern Cameroons was also geographically determined in 1922 when the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon carried out in 1916 was confirmed by the League of Nations. That same year, the British decided to administratively partition British Cameroons into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. The Southern Cameroons, then called the Cameroons Province, covered an area of 16,581 square miles with a population of 445,735.<sup>8</sup> The territory was administered as part of Southern Nigeria and later as part of Eastern Nigeria.

The study ends in 1961 because in that year, the political and international boundary between French Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons disappeared when the two territories reunited to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. French Cameroon evolved from a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations to a UN Trust Territory in 1946 and became independent as the Republic of Cameroon in 1960. The Southern Cameroons evolved from a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations to a UN Trust Territory, and opted to gain independence by joining the Republic of Cameroon following a UN-organized plebiscite in 1961.

This research was provoked by the political developments in Cameroon following the rebirth of multi-party politics. The re-introduction of multi-party politics in Cameroon in the

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<sup>8</sup> V. J. Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons, 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*, Ashgate, Ashgate Publishing House, 2001, p.4.

1990s unfortunately revived regionalism and the Anglophone-Francophone divide in Cameroon politics. Many political actors and observers began to question the many historical transformations the nation had passed through. Some Anglophones within the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) started questioning the 1961 Foumban arrangement that established the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Some of the leading politicians hitherto considered and recognized as architects of reunification such as John Ngu Foncha and Albert Mukong even called for the recreation of the state of the Southern Cameroons<sup>9</sup>.

This debate quite alive during the 1990s was not restricted to the popular press and politicians. In fact the entire history of Cameroon came under severe re-examination characterized by sentimentalism. The topic that attracted immense attention, given its degree of controversy and the deliberate manipulation of its facts, was the conduct and culmination of the reunification process between the Republic of Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons. There was the outpouring of scholarship on the subject. The major issues were: the place of the English-speaking minority within the Republic, the extent to which Anglophones have benefited from the reunification of 1961 and the much talked about Anglophone problem<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See for example, A. Mukong (ed), *The Case for the Southern Cameroons*, Enugu, Chuka Publishing Company, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> See amongst many publication on this issue; D. Abwa "Le problème Anglophone au Cameroun; Facteur d'intégration en disintégration nationale?" in C. Dubois, M. Michel and P. Soumille (eds.), *Frontières Plurielles, Frontières conflictuelles en Afrique subsaharienne*, Paris, IHCK Harmattan, 2000., D.Eyoh "Conflicting Narrative of Anglophone Protest and the Politics of Identity in Cameroon", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol 16, No 2, 1998 Pp.249-276., P. Koning, "Le problème Anglophone au Cameroon dans les années 1990," *politique Africaine*, Vol. 62, 1996 Pp25-34., P. Koning and F.B. Nyamnjoh "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 35, No 2 , 1997 Pp.209-229. Tata Simon Ngege, "The Institutional Roots of the

Another contemporary problem which was also provoked by multi-party politics and which pushed us to examine this subject was the politics of belonging or “autochthonization” politics in Cameroon since 1990. Since the re-introduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon, some political actors have systematically made use of tribal sentiments and ethnic differences to either remain in power or capture power. The 1996 constitution of the Republic of Cameroon protected indigenous communities in each constituency as municipal and parliamentary seats in each constituency were largely reserved for indigenous ethnic groups. This politics of belonging created an identity crisis especially for the South West Anglophones of French Cameroon ancestry.

The South West Elite Association (SWELA) created as a pressure group on May 25, 1991 even went further to limit membership in 1993 as its constitution indicated that to qualify for membership, “one had to be an indigene of one of the autochthonous ethnic groups that fall within the South West Province”<sup>11</sup>. This admission condition excluded South West elite of French Cameroon ancestry from SWELA. Frustrated by this exclusion, one of the prominent members of the South West elite of French Cameroon ancestry, Professor Beltus Bejanga decided to create the “Eleventh Province” Elite Association<sup>12</sup>. This new association brought together some Southwest elite of French Cameroon ancestry. They began questioning their exclusion from the politics of a province or region, which their parents had developed socio-economically and politically before and after reunification. With these issues

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Anglophone Problem” in Jean-Germain Gros (ed.), *Cameroon: Politics and Society in Critical Perspective*, Newyork, University press of Africa 2003, pp. 66-86

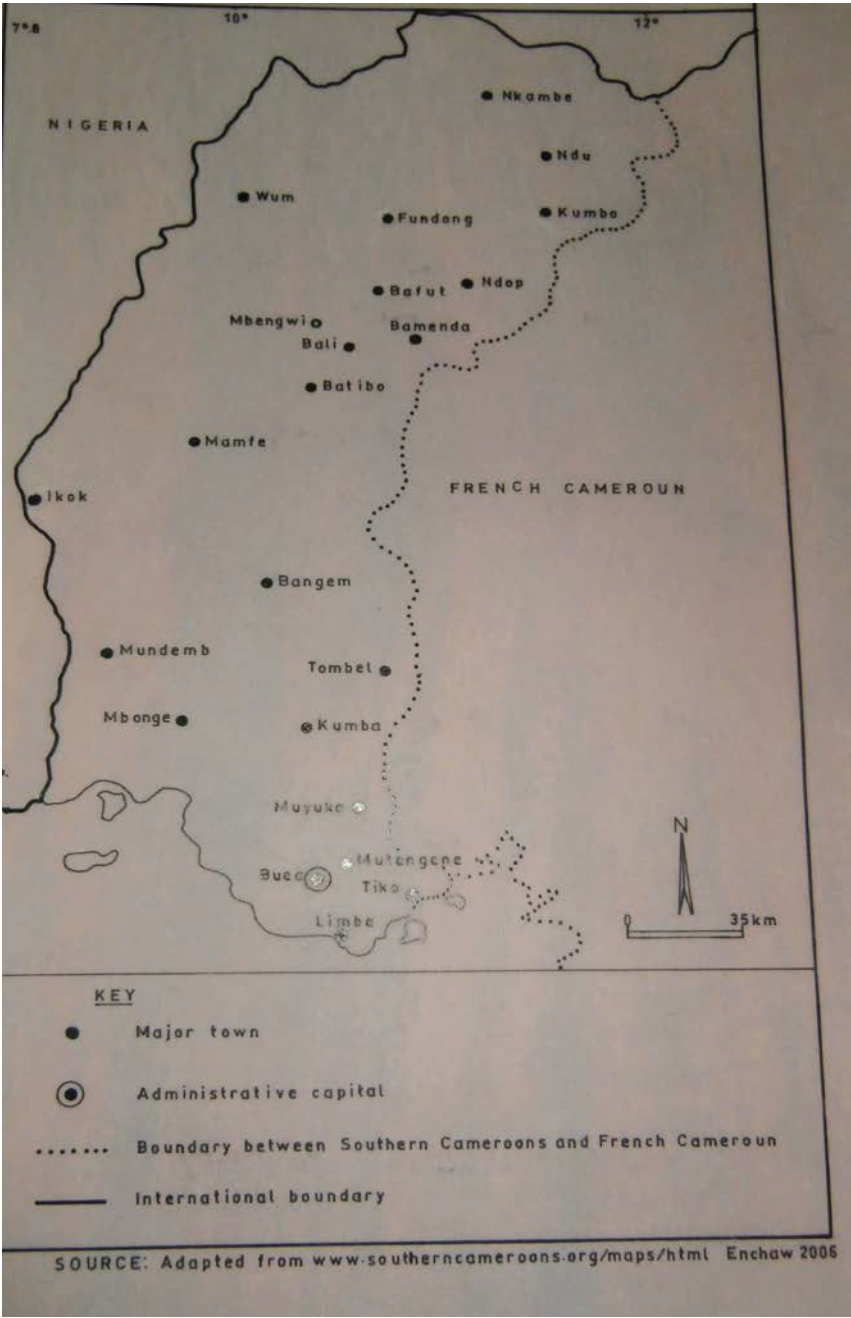
<sup>11</sup> N.F. Awasom, “Autochthonization Politics and the Invention of the Crisis of Citizenship in Cameroon,” in John Mbaku and Joseph Takougang (eds.), *The Leadership Challenge in Africa. Cameroon under Paul Biya*, Asmarar, Africa World Press, 2000, p.287.

<sup>12</sup> . Ibid, p. 288.

raised by the political events of the 1990s, we decided to investigate into the political activities of French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons before reunification.

This book therefore examines the issues involved in the migration of French Cameroonians into the Southern Cameroons, the problems of these strangers and their participation in the politics of the Southern Cameroons. The problems they faced in the territory pushed them to create pressure groups and political parties which provided them the forum to participate in the political debate that characterised the decolonisation process in the Southern Cameroons.

Map 3: The Southern Cameroons







## Chapter 1

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### The Anglo-French Partition of Cameroon

#### A. Reasons for the Partition of Cameroon

When the First World War started in Europe in 1914, Imperial Germany wished to confined it to Europe and to neutralize the colonies. The motive was not to scandalize the Africans with the spectre of the white man fighting his brother. At first the Belgian Government was in favour of this proposal, which seemed to be in accordance with article XI of the General Act of Berlin of 1885. The Belgian and German Governments were agreeable to the neutralization of the Congo Basin.

The British Government however had a different opinion. A British official, Sir E. Grey declared that it was desirable to take the offensive as vigorously as possible against all German colonial possessions especially those in Africa where German treaty rights and aspirations formed a serious obstacle to the development of British interests<sup>1</sup>. The French Government for its part changed its mind about neutrality when it learnt that the Germans were concentrating forces at Ekokobo, Bonar and at Zinga poised for attack on Gabon and French Congo. British sources also reported that German forces in East Africa had already attacked part of Northern Rhodesia<sup>2</sup>.

With this information and French change of stance, Allied Powers immediately attacked all Germans colonies in Africa. German Cameroon annexed in July 1884 was no exception. In fact in Cameroon, the Germans were on the defensive and the first shot was fired by the Allied Powers. Britain dispatched troops from Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast and Nigeria while French troops reached Cameroon from French Equatorial Africa. A contingent of Belgian

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<sup>1</sup>C. Weladji, "The Cameroon-Nigeria Border 1914 and After", *ABBLA*, NO.38-39-40, 1982, p.214.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

troops from the Congo also participated in the Cameroon campaign against the Germans

The Cameroon campaign opened on August 5, 1914 with the attack of Bouga and Zinga by French troops from Equatorial African<sup>3</sup>. British troops crossed the Nigeria –Cameroon frontier on August 19, 1914. In September 1914, the Allied Powers set up the West African Expeditionary Force under General Charles Dobell. Britain and France also attempted to establish a condominium or joint administration over the territory in order to ensure swift victory. By February 1916, the German resistance in Cameroon collapsed. The victorious powers, Britain and France decided to partition the German colony.

On March 16, 1916, the representatives of Britain and France signed an accord provisionally partitioning Cameroon. While both countries stressed the provisional nature of the partition, it was clear to local observers that the division was irrevocable<sup>4</sup>. The reasons for the Anglo-French division of Cameroon were many and varied.

### **Failure of the Proposed Condominium**

The fall of Douala in September 1914, presented the occupying powers with the problems of administration and caring for the welfare of the newly conquered area. The British had brought along personnel ready to take up administrative roles - a finance officer, a treasury staff, a branch of the Bank of West Africa, a transport and requisition agent, a military quarter masters service, an engineering service staff, a naval roads – and- ports service staff; a customs service staff, an information service and a staff administering property and commerce<sup>5</sup>. Not to be out done by the well-prepared British, the French subsequently brought their own personnel and

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<sup>3</sup> The Cameroon towns of Bouga and Zinga were part of 'New Kamerun' which was acquired from French Equatorial Africa in 1911 as a result of the Franco- German agreement over morocco.

<sup>4</sup> J. Osun-tokun, "Great Britain and the Final Partition of the Cameroon 1916-1922;" *Afrika Zamani*, No 6-7, 1977, P.53.

<sup>5</sup> V.T. Le Vine, *Cameroons from Mandate*, p. 32.

requested a condominium or joint administration over the conquered territories.

The first official discussion on the condominium was on December 14, 1914 when Monsieur Delcassé wrote to Sir Francis Bertie the British Ambassador in Paris<sup>6</sup>. The British government accepted the French proposed condominium and insisted that General Charles Dobell should assume full powers in all military and civilian matters. The British Foreign Office went further to indicate that in order to ensure continuity of the system, the next senior British military officer should be designated as temporary successor to Dobell in case of the latter's death or disability<sup>7</sup>. In fact the British insisted on dominating the condominium and this made the application of the proposed condominium difficult.

Also the condominium was never applied because of many issues. The first disagreement was over the "authority issue". Britain and France disagreed on the powers of Dobell. The British insisted that Dobell should exercise both military and civilian functions. The French wanted a French civilian administrator to assist and advice Dobell. The British refused this proposal and also rejected the idea of a potential French successor to Dobell<sup>8</sup>.

Apart from the unequal representation of the British and French personnel in the administrative machinery in Douala, the "territorial issue" also divided the powers. The territorial issue concerned whether or not the Condominium arrangement should be extended to the regions of Kamerun jointly and separately conquered by the Allied troops or, alternatively, what was to be the basis of eventual partition of those territories between the Allies. The British wanted the condominium to be extended to all territories of German Cameroon jointly or separately conquered. The French refused and insisted that the condominium should only be applied to territories

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<sup>6</sup> C. Weladji, "The Cameroon – Nigeria Border", p. 218

<sup>7</sup> For a detail study of the Anglo-French condominium, see L.Z. Elango, *The Anglo-French Condominium in Cameroon, 1914-1916. History of a Misunderstanding*, Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1987

<sup>8</sup> 6 Ibid, P. 28

conquered by the joint Anglo-French force<sup>9</sup>. The French considered the extension of the condominium to territories which their troops had conquered unaided, including south-eastern Cameroon, out of the question. To the French, these were territories of which they had been unjustly deprived by the Franco- German convention in 1911, but which they had now retrieved with their unaided arms<sup>10</sup>.

Besides, Britain and France did not agree on the modalities for financing the condominium. The British wanted each power to take care of the upkeep of its troops in Cameroon while the French wanted the joint Anglo-French military administration to be jointly sponsored by the two powers. The French rejected the idea of each power sponsoring its troops because there were more French than British troops in Cameroon.

Also, both the British Colonial Office and the Foreign Office, more often than not, failed to adopt a common approach to the French proposed condominium. In fact, the Colonial Officials in the Anglo-French discussions accused the Foreign Office of being “hopeless in such a matter” and that the Foreign Office knew nothing about administration<sup>11</sup>. The British especially the Colonial Office also felt it was not worthwhile to set-up a system of Joint Anglo-French Administration which was to be replaced by another as soon as the Germans surrendered.

The condominium was never applied because the human, material and financial resources of the proposed condominium were essentially British so much so that the administration was largely British. Furthermore the French seriously objected to Dobell’s reports on the military situation in Cameroon accusing him of down - playing the contribution of the French forces in the war against Germany.

When the Germans were finally ousted from Cameroon in 1916, the proclaimed Joint Anglo-French Administration had not left the drawing board. Partition became the solution and the best way to

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.29

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*, p.131.

satisfy the ambitions of the powers. It was even reported that when Dobell arrived Douala he organized a type of referendum whose results indicated that the population north of the Wouri preferred the British while those in the South stood for France<sup>12</sup>. This revelation therefore favoured the partition of Cameroon given that Britain and France could not agree on the modalities for the setting up of a condominium.

### **Humanitarian Considerations**

The defeat of Germany in the First World War led to another scramble by the victorious powers for colonies in Africa and elsewhere. The victorious powers expropriated all German colonies and justified the expropriation as humanitarian. The Anglo-French partition of Cameroon was disguised as a humanitarian undertaking. They carried out widespread campaign to expose the various reprehensible aspects of German's colonial administration and indicted Germany for unbridled atrocities committed against Africans during the war and therefore decided that

Having regard to the record of German administration in the Colonies formerly part of the German empire and to the menace which the possession by Germany of submarine bases in many parts would necessarily constitute to the freedom and security of all nations, the Allied and Associated Powers are agreed that in no circumstances should any of the German colonies be restored to Germany<sup>13</sup>.

Some of the evidence produced to expose Germany's misrule in African was the maltreatment of Cameroonians during the war. The Allied and Associated Powers agreed that such treatment was quite inconsistent with international war ethics. These powers were therefore determined to partition Cameroon and introduce the Africans to better forms of administration.

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<sup>12</sup>E. Madiba, "La France et la Redistribution des territoires du Cameroun, 1914-1916," *Afrika Zamani* nos. 12-13, 1977, p. 39

<sup>13</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.12

Germany was also indicted for the appalling labour conditions in Cameroon; the wages paid to African employees were said to be nominal; moreover, “German overseers had practically unlimited powers in dealing with African workers and could, if they chose exercise those powers with unbridled brutality”<sup>14</sup>. Such brutality did not speak well of Europeans and the partitioning powers were determined to end it and other labour related crimes like torture, rape and mutilations.

There was also the added certainty of fearful vengeance that would be wreaked upon the wretched Africans who had aided or abetted the Allied Powers. The restoration of German Cameroon it was feared would result in the decimation of the Duala and other populations that fought against the Germans. In fact Lord Curzon, a member of Lloyd George’s war cabinet recalled the savagery and bloodshed connected with the name of Karl Peters and the treatment of the Hereros by Von Trotha who massacred that unhappy people by thousands and confirmed the partition of Cameroon out of fear that such cruelty could be repeated in Cameroon<sup>15</sup>.

Lord Curzon also pointed to the war cabinet that German war objectives included; the destruction of rival powers, especially Britain; the annexation of British, French, Portuguese and Belgian colonies; the creation out of these spoils of great “Central African German dominion-an India of Africa and the creation of a huge “black army”-”an army of offence and aggression against the rest of Africa”<sup>16</sup>. Curzon therefore warned that this huge ‘black army’ would not only be a threat to British interest but to civilization itself. The future of world peace therefore demanded the exclusion of Germany from Africa.

Britain and France therefore partitioned Cameroon to eliminate threats to world peace, end these inhumane aspects of German imperialism and colonial exploitation and to introduce the positive values of western civilization. Most importantly, the partition of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.13

<sup>15</sup> Osuntokun, “Great Britain and the Final Partition”, p.55.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.59.

Cameroon dislocated German plans for a huge black army that was to be a threat to the world.

The humanitarian reasons for the partition of Cameroon were less convincing because there were other cases of reprehensible colonial administration in Africa. The Belgian administration in the Congo, the treatment of Africans in South Africa under General Smuts, the expropriation of land belonging to indigenous people of Rhodesia were similar to what the German people did in Cameroon. It would therefore appear that the First World War gave the victorious powers the opportunity to put Germany on trial for what all of them were guilty of doing.

### **The Desire to Punish Germany**

The Allied Powers partitioned Cameroon in order to punish Germany and prevent future wars. Germany was seen as being responsible for the war which had caused the Allied and Associated Powers so much in the expenditure of blood and money. The fear of Germany using her colonies as bases of offensive operation in a future war contributed to the partition and dislocation of the colony.

The potentialities of African territories both in terms of human and material resources, which Germany might exploit in her pursuit of the policy of *Welt Macht* also made the allies very adamant in their determination to deprive Germany of any advantage in the event of a future confrontation<sup>17</sup>. The French overseas possessions had proved to be such great assets in human and material terms during the crisis that France insisted on the partition of German Cameroon. Britain on her part feared that the Germans could convert Douala into a strong naval base to threaten the trade routes to South America and South Africa<sup>18</sup>.

Apart from depriving the Germans of all the resources or wealth in Cameroon, the Allied Powers wanted to exploit the plantation and

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<sup>17</sup> Osun-tokun, "Great Britain and the Final Partition", p.54.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

commercial installations to offset the cost of the war and compensate themselves for the liberation of Cameroon. It should be noted that the Cameroon campaign was planned for six months but the Germans resistance only collapsed after eighteen months exhausting the allies financially and militarily.

### **Anglo-French Territorial Ambitions**

The partition of Cameroon considered a provisional measure in 1916 became irrevocable by 1919 because of Anglo-French territorial desires in Africa. Historically, Britain in a victorious war had always satisfied her territorial ambitions by annexing the colonies of her enemies. Keeping her sections of Cameroon as part of her empire was in keeping with British tradition<sup>19</sup>.

As concern Cameroon, this position was rationalized by various arguments. The British felt that the campaign in the Cameroon concerned Nigeria more than any other West African dependency and that its successful conclusion was naturally regarded by Nigerians soldiers, chiefs and emirs as due to their valour and that to return the territory to Germany would undermine British prestige in Nigeria<sup>20</sup>. British colonial authorities knew that the chiefs in Nigeria were accustomed to seeing the conquerors take over the land of the conquered and they had to behave as conquerors.

The British annexation of parts of Cameroon was also influenced by the desire to rectify the eastern borders of Nigeria<sup>21</sup>. The Anglo-German treaty of 1893 divided the Borno Empire and Adamawa kingdom. Britain wanted to regain parts of the German Borno such as Woma, Zummu, Malaba, Yafuda and Gude<sup>22</sup>. Much of Adamawa was also separated from the capital Yola and Britain wanted to regain these districts in order to restore the territorial integrity of this state.

The annexation of German Borno and German Adamawa could provide the indigenous people of Nigeria with grazing land. The

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.54.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

<sup>21</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.20.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 21.



region was also said to be important because of its markets and raw material for the British textile industry<sup>23</sup>. In the opinion of Lugard, it was necessary to retain within the limits of a British protectorate the whole of the Benue River in so far as it can by any stretch of plausible arguments be said to be navigable<sup>24</sup>. Lastly it was considered that Britain should obtain the Mandara emirate for strategic reasons. Apart from the historical connection with Borno, the Mandara Mountain could serve for a considerable distance as a natural barrier between the British and French territories<sup>25</sup>.

In the case of the Cross River and Rio- del-Rey basins, Britain wanted to re-unite the dismembered portions of the Ekoi and Boki tribes to their main stock in Nigeria, and the undoing of the partitions of the cross river delta<sup>26</sup>. The British therefore proposed a boundary that could meet the sincere approbation of the natives of the Ossidinge Division.

French territorial ambitions were also instrumental in the partition of Cameroon. There was a strong and influential pro-colonial lobby in France represented by the 'Parti colonial'. Its war aims included an Anglo-French repartition of West African with France gaining Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Britain's sphere of Togo land and the territory on the Northern Nigeria border<sup>27</sup>. With particular references to Cameroon the pro-colonial lobby in France wanted the maritime coast of the territory especially the Douala port. The port was indispensable to the development of French Equatorial Africa<sup>28</sup>. Douala was the terminus of two rail routes, a port town, and a strategic naval base which the French wanted at all cost. In fact the French regarded the possession of Douala as essential and as a matter on which there could be no compromise<sup>29</sup>. However the French claim that the Douala port was

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Osun-tokun, "Great Britain and the Final Partition", p.56.

<sup>26</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 22.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.18.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Osun tokun, "Great Britain and the Final Partition", p.56.

indispensable for the development of Equatorial Africa was a pretext since France had already regained 'neu Cameroon' together with the river Congo and its important tributaries for the economic exploitation of Equatorial Africa.

### **Anglo-French Colonial Rivalries**

The haste with which the decision to partition Cameroon was taken and implemented can be attributed to the relationship between the British, French and Germans during the period of conquest, occupation and partition of Africa. The partition was the result of the Anglo-French failure to agree to let one single power take Cameroon. The traditional national antagonism and colonial rivalries between the two powers, dating back to the beginning of the 1880's apparently made it difficult for them to cooperate in matters concerning territorial acquisition in the colonies.

From the time of the scramble for African territories to the beginning of the war in 1914, each of these powers was always in difficulties with the other. The conflict or rivalry between these two powers was seen in Egypt and Sudan and in West Africa where clashes between traders from these nations almost led to war. In Central and Equatorial Africa, the British had attempted to deprive France of a foothold in the area by teaming up with and encouraging the Belgians to expand their territory of Congo to include Ubangi-Shari-Chad and Equatorial in Southern Sudan where the French had indicated an interest<sup>30</sup>.

In the Cameroons, both Britain and Germany had cooperated, before annexation, against France and had protested strongly when it was learned that the French were about to annex territories just below Douala, at Big Batanga<sup>31</sup>. When the Germans decided in 1884 to take advantage of British hesitation to annex the Cameroons, the losers did not settle their differences, and the territory again became

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<sup>30</sup> R. Robinson, J. Gallagher and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, London, Macmillan, 1961, pp. 330-331.

<sup>31</sup> Shirley Ardener, *Eye-witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon 1883-1887*, Buea, Government press, 1968, p. 20. It is worth noting here that Germany succeeded in the annexation because France supported her moves against Britain.

an area of contest between the allies during the war. It was this traditional rivalry over colonies that influenced the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon in 1916.

### **Economic Potentials of Cameroon**

The sharing of Cameroon was also provoked by the economic potentials of the colony. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European traders, British colonial agents and some of those who explored the hinterland of the Cameroons were impressed by its enormous economic potentials. Harry Johnston, the British consul in the Bight of Biafra, referred to the areas around the mountain, or the coastal district of what became the Southern Cameroons, as the Lebanon of West Africa<sup>32</sup>. According to him the area was exceptional with regard to its climate, vegetation and animal life. It was also well adapted for the growth of cotton, coffee and other tropical production<sup>33</sup>. The Germans also referred to Cameroon as the pearl of German colonies and a German agricultural chemist who studied the soil in Cameroon thought that after some fifty years, the territory could be well compared with the best colonies of the Portuguese, the Dutch, or the English<sup>34</sup>.

During the period of German protectorate, the full economic potentials of Cameroon were revealed. Besides the production and export of bananas, cocoa, ivory, palm oil and kernel, rubber and timber, there were very promising signs of abundance of mineral wealth. Traces of Gold were reported in several places, and there were also traces of graphite, iron ore, mica of good quality and petroleum in the coastal districts<sup>35</sup>.

In addition, there was considerable German capital already invested in the territory, and this too caught the attention of the rivals. Lord Lugard, who was very anxious that the British annex the entire German protectorate in 1916, observed in an official telegram

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<sup>32</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Rudins, *Germans in the Cameroon*, p. 274.

to London that “the value of machinery, buildings, stores and harbour works captured (in Douala) in an unchanged condition is very great<sup>36</sup>”.

Experiences during the war also convinced the British government of the potential strategic value of rubber and palm oil estates in Cameroon. As a result, the river Mungo became the Anglo-French boundary south of Dschang District, because of its importance in providing access to the sea for the plantations situated on the western slopes of the Cameroon Mountain<sup>37</sup>.

The mountain itself was also seen to be suitable for a sanatorium where Europeans in Nigeria and elsewhere in West Africa could enjoy a home climate<sup>38</sup>. Cameroon was therefore rich in minerals, tropical raw materials and cash crops. Its suitable climate and conducive environment were also great attractions to the powers that were interested in the coast of West Africa.

With these potentials, neither of the powers wanted all of the property and wealth of the territory to revert wholly to the other and so the partition became the only acceptable solution. Besides, the manner in which Germany staged the annexation coup in 1884 was humiliating to both the French and the British<sup>39</sup>. Consequently they both wanted to teach her a lesson by dismembering that protectorate and making it difficult for Germany to ever think of regaining it. (By 1916 when the territory was partitioned, German troops were still in Rio Muni. There were fears that the Germans could still organize a counter-attack and recapture Cameroon.) For this and other reasons, Cameroon could not escape partition.

## **B. Nature of the Partition of Cameroon**

When discussions on the proposed condominium failed to progress, the British Foreign Office informed the French

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<sup>36</sup> Fanzo, “Trans-Frontier Relations”, p. 124. Also see: W.R.Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919*, oxford University press, 1967. p. 58.

<sup>37</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*. p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Rudins, *Germans in Cameroon*, pp.15-59.

Government that Britain would be grateful if the French Government would make proposal for the equitable division of Cameroon in order that each country may arrange for the administration of its own sphere. Such a division according to the British was to be temporal and provisional until the definite settlement at the conclusion of the peace<sup>40</sup>.

In February 1916, the British War Office decided to hand the whole of the German colony to France in order to raise French morale. Lancelot Oliphant, a senior official of the Foreign Office was asked to inform Picot, a French diplomat who was in London, about the offer. At a meeting, Oliphant asked Picot to show, on a map, what part of Cameroon the French will like. Picot traced an area of 143.000 square miles<sup>41</sup>. Oliphant agreed there and then for the proposal, and asked George Picot to inform his government accordingly. This was how part of Cameroon became British. The Picot-line reserved 34.000 square miles for Britain.

On 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1916, the Picot line was adopted as the provisional boundary between the British and French spheres of Cameroon. The British zone was defined as:

The area between Nigeria and a line starting from the head of Bimbia creek immediately east of the 'O' in Tiko and running North – East to Victoria District boundary, Hence, thence along District boundary to just south of Fangwang's, Hence north east to Noun river, Bactus being just within British sphere, then along boundary between Bamenda and Bamum District to junction of Banyo District boundary, hence in a general north easterly direction to Dube mountain passing just east of Uwa and Wokunde and west of Duru and Gandua. From Dube mountains line runs to 5 miles east of Dodo-Kontscha-Uro-Mali road just east of Uro-Mali, thence North West to Nigeria boundary at point due south of Yola<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Elango, *Anglo-French Condominium*, p.64.

<sup>41</sup> Amaazee, "Igbo Factor", p.11.

<sup>42</sup> Elango, *Anglo-French Condominium*, p.72.

In April 1916, French and British troops moved to their respective spheres of Cameroon. The French appointed General Joseph Aymerich Commissioner for French Cameroon and a British order-in-council appointed General Charles Dobell Commissioner for British Cameroons<sup>43</sup>.

On June 28, 1919, Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles and according to article 119 of this treaty, Germany relinquished all her colonies to the Allied and Associated Powers. Germany was also deprived of important rich territories in Europe such as Alsace and Lorraine, Eupen and Malmedy, Saar coalfields and others. With these sanctions on Germany, Britain and France became convinced that their stay in Cameroon could become permanent.

On July 10, 1919, the British Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner and the French Minister of Colonies, Henri Simon, meet in London and signed the Milner-Simon Agreement. This agreement defined the boundaries of British Cameroons and French Cameroon. In 1922, the League of Nations through Articles 22 and 23 accepted the Anglo-French arrangement in former German Cameroon. Britain and France administered their respective spheres of Cameroon as mandated territories of the League of Nations.

What made the partition of Cameroon significant to the inhabitants of the territory was the nature of the partition. Britain obtained only an insignificant portion and the interests of the inhabitants were ignored. If Britain had taken advantage of its long established relations with the territory and above all, if the interest of the inhabitant had been decisive in the partition, then one would have expected that in the final partition of Cameroon, Britain would obtain either a larger share or an equal share of the territory<sup>44</sup>.

It was due exclusively, to the resources and efforts of Britain that the Slave Trade was abolished in Cameroon at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The British set up a Naval Squadron at the coast to arrest and detain slavers. British traders introduced a substitute trade

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<sup>43</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*, p.85.

<sup>44</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.15.

that was labelled Legitimate Trade while British missionaries from the London Baptist Missionary Society educated the natives on the evil effects of the Slave Trade. This gave British traders a numerically dominant position in the territory. In addition, British Missionaries of the London Baptist Missionary Society had operated in the territory for approximately half a century before it was annexed by Germany<sup>45</sup>.

Comparatively, France had very limited influence in the Cameroon both before and after Germany annexed the territory. Before 1884, French traders in the Congo District attempted to establish some influence in the South Eastern part of what became Cameroon, but were opposed by the Douala Chiefs. A petition from the chiefs, possibly induced by British traders was sent to the British Government requesting that French traders be restrained from any efforts designed to extend their activities and, above all, to annex any part of what the chiefs claimed as their subject territory<sup>46</sup>.

The protest of Douala Chiefs appears to have contributed to the prevention of French traders from having a strong foothold in the Cameroons before the German annexation of the territory. The French had only one of the many European Trading Houses in the territory in 1882. By 1884 French traders therefore confined their activities to Equatorial Africa.

The widespread display of pro-British attitudes among the indigenes was therefore because before and even to a large extent during the occupation of Cameroon by Germany, it had lain within a British commercial and missionary "sphere of influence". The major Lingua Franca of the people was Pidgin English due to the British influence. Despite British popularity with the inhabitants of the territory, Britain received only 1/5 of Cameroon while France, without a strong foothold in Cameroon, obtained 4/5 of the territory. The reasons for this unequal partition and the rather slender portion reserved for Britain were as follows:

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<sup>45</sup> Studies on the work of missionaries in Cameroon are many see for example: Emerson Kwast, "The Origins and Nineteen Century Development of Protestant Christianity in West Cameroon, 1841-1886", PhD Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1972.

<sup>46</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 15.

## French War Demands

In February, 1916, the British war cabinet was ready to hand the whole of the German colony of Cameroon to France in order to raise French morale. When Picot traced an area of 143.000 square miles or four-fifth of Cameroon the British did not oppose because they wanted France to continue the war against Germany. The French insisted on acquiring the port of Douala because of its strategic importance as far as the exploitation of French Equatorial Africa was concerned. Without any hesitation, and without waiting for further developments, to the annoyance of some British soldiers, Britain handed over Douala to France during the 1916 provisional partition<sup>47</sup>.

The inevitable result was that all other areas and places east of Douala including Yabassi and Bafia, which had been captured entirely by British soldiers became French. Other places such as Yaounde and Efulen for example, captured in a joint Anglo-French military operation, commanded by a British officer, were also included in the French sector<sup>48</sup>. In compensation, France accepted the incorporation of Dikwa into Bornu and dropped her demands for a share of German East Africa<sup>49</sup>.

France also set its eyes on Dschang and contrived some apparently convincing reasons to take over the administration of the district as well as Nkongsamba which had also been captured entirely by the British troops. According to the French, Nkongsamba a railway terminus could be linked to the Sultanate of Banyo by a road through Dschang and Foumban<sup>50</sup>. Although many of the places in Dschang district were already being administered by Britain, France insisted on the rectification of the provisional frontier in order to transfer Dschang to the French sphere. Britain finally yielded to French pressure. However, Britain retained three important Bamileke

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Elango, *Anglo-French Condominium*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>50</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.21.



tribes-most of Bangwa (Nweh), Mundani and part of Mbo – all situated on the western slopes of Dschang Plateau. For reasons of mutual interest, these areas were included in the British sector in order to ‘fence off’ the Anglo-French boundary and prevent smuggling<sup>51</sup>.

### **British War Demands**

The unequal partition of Cameroon was also the result of British war –time demands. Britain was quite satisfied with only an insignificant little strip hardly worth reserving but which could give the colony of Nigeria better boundaries. Such a strip had to bring completely within the Nigerian borders native ethnic groups that had hitherto been partly within British territory and partly outside<sup>52</sup>.

British colonial officers in Nigeria therefore directed their concern to the Borno Empire and the Adamawa Kingdom which had been split by the Anglo- German treaty of 1893 and, after slight adjustments, ratified in 1913 and also to the Cross River and Rio del Rey basins which were split by the same treaty.

In the Milner-Simon agreement which concluded the boundaries of the Anglo-French partition, Britain was able to secure some parts of what had been German Borno, including the small area around Woma, Zummu, Malaba, Yafuda, Gude and all the villages on the left of river Kalia. The north and north-west of Mandara and nearly all of Mandagali were also included in the British Sector<sup>53</sup>. These areas were of great strategic, political and economic importance even if the attempt to reunite the Borno Empire was not complete as Kousseri and Longone were given to France.

The Anglo-German treaty had also divided the Adamawa Kingdom placing its capital Yola in the British territory of Nigeria and the overwhelming majority of the subject states in German Cameroon. However, as in the case of the Borno Empire, the Milner-

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<sup>51</sup>There was an important commerce of palm-oil, groundnuts and cattle across the boundary.

<sup>52</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.21.

Simon boundary failed to remedy the injustice. The majority of the subject states of the Adamawa Kingdom, including for example, Garoua, Ngaoundere, Koncha, Banyo, Tibati, and Maroua were handed over to France. In other words, France acquired almost all of what had been the northern part of the German Cameroon and thus secured the basis for further claims to other areas south of Adamawa Kingdom. It was this British desire to gain first territories needed to reshape the borders of Nigeria and reunite the divided Borno and the divided Adamawa that determined the nature of the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon.

### **The East African Factor**

In the partition, the interest of the indigenous people notwithstanding, Britain allowed France a lion's share of the territory in order to accomplish imperialist interest elsewhere as compensation. Britain wanted to acquire German East Africa or specifically Tanganyika in order to link up all the British East African territories with North Africa, a development which would be beneficial to Britain. First Britain would become the dominant power in the Indian Ocean.

Secondly, the acquisition of German East African was to expand and strengthen the economic possibilities of both Britain and South Africa where Britain had significant economic interest, at the expense of other imperial powers. Thirdly, the German plan to create a great Central African Empire which was to be linked with the Turkish Empire in the North and which would have been a great threat to all nations was dislocated<sup>54</sup>.

German East Africa therefore became the most decisive factor in the nature of the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon. France was allowed a lion's share of Kamerun because Britain wanted to preempt French counter claims in East African. The British effort to keep France out of East Africa started at the beginning of the war. When the war started, the British Government turned down a French offer of troops to help occupy German East Africa. The Colonial

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Office stated clearly that it was “confident that their proposed expedition against German East Africa will be successful and they do not want to share the spoils with the French”<sup>55</sup>. Cameroon was therefore partitioned because Britain wanted to exclude France from the war in East Africa and to dominate this part of the continent. East Africa was not of any strategic interest to France and France could certainly ignore for Cameroon. This arbitrary and unequal partition of Cameroon had immediate and long-term effects on the indigenous people.

### C. Effects of the Partition of Cameroon

#### Division of Ethnic Groups

The Anglo-French boundary commission was instructed to “lay down frontiers in accordance with natural features, river, hills and watershed”<sup>56</sup>. In the southern (Cameroon) portion, the non –respect of ethnic, kingdom or traditional political frontiers produced important political consequences. Ethnic groups and brotherly chiefdoms were divided. The *proces-verbal* defining the boundary between Mamfe Division and the *circonscription de Dschang* signed at Santchou on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1926, divided the Bamileke ethnic group. In a confidential note dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 1923 and addressed to the French governor in Yaoundé, the *chef de circonscription de Dschang*, Ripert noted that

De fait, le mot Bangwa existe bien, mais il n’a aucune signification ethnique. Il signifie le pays des producteurs d’huile de palm par opposition au mot M’BELEKE-dont les allemands ont fait Bamileke-qui indique le pays des producteurs de maïs et d’arachides. La race est parfaitement identique à BANGWA et M’BELEKE: les productions seules diffèrent.....<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> NAY, APA 10077, Ripert, Chef de la circonscription de Dschang a Monsieur le Commissaire.

<sup>56</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.22.

<sup>57</sup> Weladji, “Cameroon-Nigeria Border”, p.244.

Bamileke land was therefore divided as France received Dschang and Britain retained three important Bamileke groups-most of Bangwa (Nweh), Mundani, and part of Mbo-all situated on the western slopes of Dschang plateau<sup>58</sup>. The British controlled chiefdoms include Fotem, Fonsongo, Fonjou Moto, Foreke Tchatcha, Fotabonng Ouang, Fotabong 1, Fosi Mongdi, Fojo Ndongotse, Fosimo and Bamenbou<sup>59</sup>. For reasons of mutual interests, these chiefdoms were included in the British sector in order to 'fence off' the Anglo-French boundary and prevent smuggling<sup>60</sup>.

Apart from ethnic groups, chiefdoms, villages and families were divided. Still at the Dschang-Mamfe borders, the village of Fossong-Elelem in the British Cameroons was part of the Fongo-Tungo chiefdom in French Cameroon. Other territories of the chiefdoms of Fongo-Tungo and the chiefdoms of Fossimo, Fonsongo, Fonjumetor and Foto Dungetet in Mamfe Division, straddled the boundary<sup>61</sup>. This caused confusion and conflict between the chieftaincies and the two administrations made several attempts to find a just solution to it. The Mamfe-Dschang boundary was therefore fixed without regard for the unity and wishes of the inhabitants of the area. The people of Dschang and Bangwa were the same people who had for many years moved unhampered across their land before the partition.

Similarly ethnic groups or polities with similar culture were divided. The Bamum were separated from the Nso and Ndop chiefdoms occupied by the British. On August 15, 1920, part of Bamenda Division, made up of Bagam, Bamum Kumbo and Bamenjong was transferred to France in accordance with the convention of 10 July 1919<sup>62</sup>. The river Mungo became the Anglo-French boundary south of Dschang District dividing Douala and Mungo people between French and British Cameroons. The Mbo, Balong and Bakossi ethnic groups suffered the same partition.

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<sup>58</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 21.

<sup>59</sup> Weladji, "Cameroon-Nigeria Border", p. 244.

<sup>60</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons* p.21.

<sup>61</sup> Fanzo, "Trans-Frontier Relations", p. 62.

<sup>62</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons* p.22.

The boundary divided the Mbo chiefdoms into almost two equal parts. On the French side were the Santcho, Njinjam, Singam, Mama, Menkoue, Mbokambo and Ekondo villages while on the British side were the Fonwen, Fonjoungo, Fotabong, Elumba, Tanga, Kamlempe, Nsoa and Finape villages<sup>63</sup>. Like with the Elung clan of the Bakossi, the Anglo-French boundary split the Mangem clan assigning to the French its original site with the clan head and to the British, seven out of eight of its constituent villages<sup>64</sup>.

On French insistence, the Ediminjo River to its junction with the Mungo River was maintained as the boundary between Kumba Division and Mbanga circonscription. It was noted that this boundary divided the Balong into two<sup>65</sup>. The divided ethnic groups, chiefdoms, polities or families certainly protested the Anglo-French boundary.

### **Protest against the partition**

Indeed, protests against the Anglo- French partition of Cameroon were many. The partition left some Cameroonians under French rule who had wanted to be ruled by Britain. This was the case with sultan Njoya of Bamum who requested the British king to take over his kingdom. In a letter to the English king, written in early 1916, sultan Njoya wrote:

I, Njoya, 16<sup>th</sup> King of Bamum send my humble salutation to the Great king of the English who puts the evil men to flight and the troublesome to prison. I thank the great English king for sending his strong soldiers to free my country...they have delivered me from the hands of the Germans who are men of darkness, who have no belongings, who are liars who trouble the people continually. I have collected all my people and they all wish to belong to the king of the English, and to his sons and the

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<sup>63</sup> Nzume, "British and French Administration of Peoples on the Southern Borderlands of Cameroon", p.227.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Weladji, "Cameroon-Nigeria Border", p.245.

sons of his sons. May he take them into his hands and as a father takes his children, may he show them wisdom and help and teach them to be strongmen as the English themselves.

I wish to follow the kind of England and to be his servant together with my country that my land many be freshened with dew and that the Germans and all unclean things may be driven out. All my people, my old men and my old women, my men and my girls, the weak and the strong desire this...

There is a very small thing in my hand, which I wish to offer humbly to the English king.... It is the chair in which my fathers and I have always sat and which is my strength and power. Also the two large elephant tusks which are on each side of it... The chair and tusks are nothing to the Great king, but they are all I have... I agree to the English flag which hands in my town and I give greetings three times and give my land and all that I have to the English. Njoya, 16<sup>th</sup> King of Bamum”<sup>66</sup>

Apart from Njoya, the Douala also petitioned the Anglo-French boundary. They sent a delegation to the British Resident Officer in Buea demanding British control over them. This demand was also extended to the Paris Peace Conference on August 18, 1919<sup>67</sup>. The Douala delegation to Paris called on the Peace Makers to liberate them from French rule and place their people under British administration.

When Alexander Ndoumbe Duala Manga Bell (son of the late king Rudolf Duala Manga Bell) returned from Paris in 1920, he made contacts with some chiefs in Kumba Division to, in the words of the Resident, “gain their support in the case of an eventual rebellion against the French”<sup>68</sup>. It is alleged that the Kumba chiefs replied that “You can do what you like with your French, but we are British, and intend to remain so; you know quite well if you drive out the white

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<sup>66</sup> Cited in Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*, pp. 82-84.

<sup>67</sup> For details on anti-French protest during the mandate see; Jonathan Derrick, “Douala under the French mandate, 1916-1936”, Ph.D Dissertation in History, University of London, 1978.

<sup>68</sup> Chiabi, “Background to Nationalism”, p.76.

man, in one month every town would be fighting its neighbour”<sup>69</sup>. Bell returned from Paris obsessed with the idea of the self-determination of the smaller nations and the “Black man’s country for the black man”. He was the first to begin spreading the idea of the independence of the Cameroons

In 1916, barely a few months after the establishment of the border, a deputation of the Balong ethnic group met the Resident of the Cameroons Province and begged that the portion of their ethnic group in the French territory be united with them under one government.<sup>70</sup> The chiefs later complained bitterly that the divided Balong were being forced to pay taxes twice to the French and the British because neither administration allowed them to travel freely within their tribal territory carrying only the other administration’s tax disc.<sup>71</sup>

Further north, the Mbo Chiefs in the French territory also wanted all the Mbo Villages to be united together under one government. During his tour of the Mbo District in the British territory in 1924, the DO of Mamfe Division, received personal applications from several Mbo Chiefs in the French zone requesting that their villagers who were crossing over the boundary in to the British territory be returned to them. They gave a strong impression in their applications that things would be a lot easier for the Mbo group if something was done about the boundary which divided them into two parts<sup>72</sup>.

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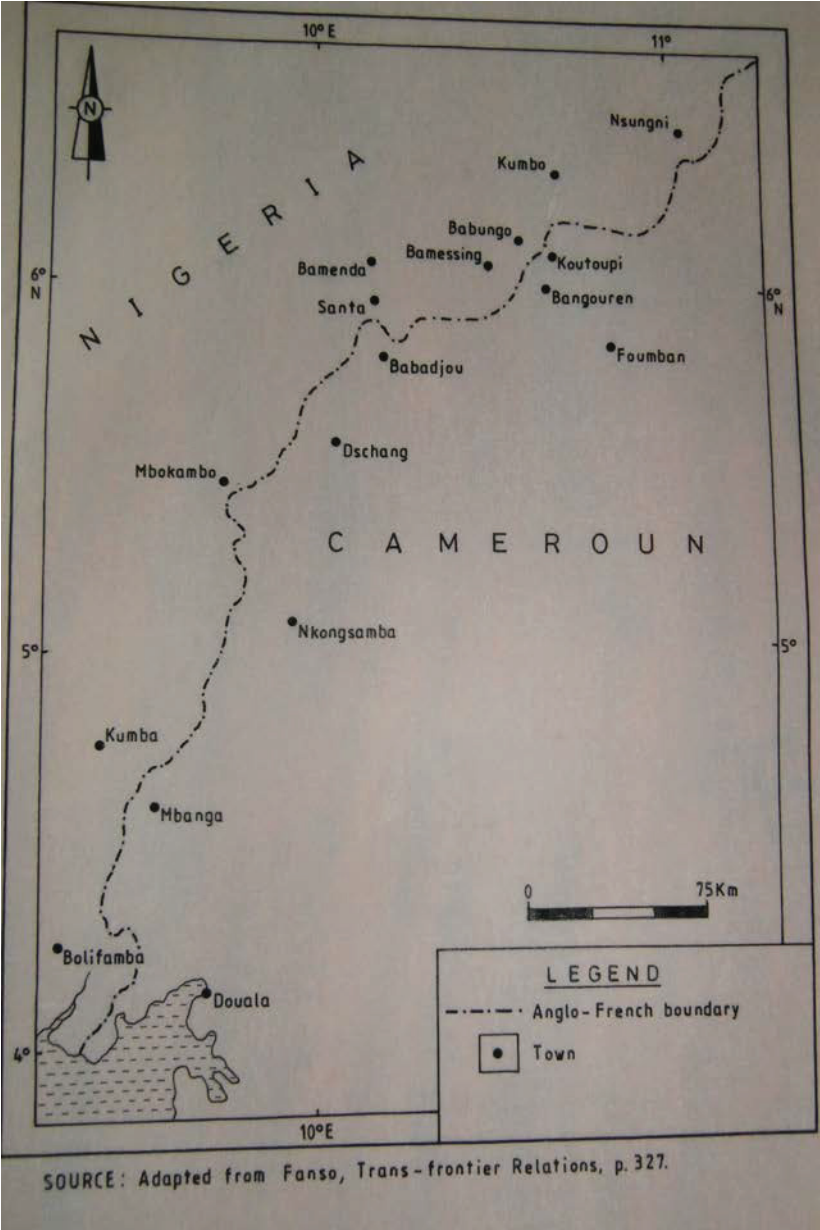
<sup>69</sup> Cited in Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*, p.187.

<sup>70</sup> Fanson, “Trans-Frontier Relations”, p.195.

<sup>71</sup> This was contrary to the provisions of the mandate.

<sup>72</sup> NAB, file Tb/1924/1, DO Mamfe to Resident Buea, July 17, 1924, p.3.

Map 4: The Anglo-French Southern Boundary



The same attitude was adopted by the Bangwa people who were separated from their kin group in Dschang by the boundary. When



Dschang officially passed from the British to the French administration on August 23, 1920, Asonganyi, the chief of Fontem protested vehemently to the representatives of the two governments, arguing that the new boundary had divided his chiefdom from its main parent group and attached it to groups with which they had nothing in common.<sup>73</sup>

What Chief Asonganyi and his people, like peoples of the other divided groups, were saying was that they should not be deprived of their traditional rights on either sides of the frontier. Thus, the kin villages flanking both sides of the Mungo River divided by it as an international boundary approached the Anglo-French Boundary Commission in 1938, with a request not to be deprived of their traditional fishing rights (and movements across the river) as a result of the frontier demarcation. The British protected persons asked to continue their fishing activities on the banks situated at the outlets of the mouths of the delta. The French protected persons asked to continue to exercise their fishing right in the small tributaries on the banks of the stream above the point where the frontier leaves the river.<sup>74</sup>

Fishing and trading on the Mungo were the two great means of subsistence of these people, and they could not imagine how they could survive if they were deprived of fishing rights on the river. For the other divided groups, like the Bamileke, the Babajou, the Bamoum and the Tikar proper, their traditional rights across the frontier most certainly included such subsistence activities as hunting, cultivation, and grazing.

The chief of Misselele also appealed to the Resident at Buea against using the Mungo River as the Anglo-French boundary line, and urged that the administration ceases applying Nigerian customary laws to divided groups<sup>75</sup>. The Bakossi people also made several verbal applications for all their villages and territories to be united under the

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<sup>73</sup> NAY, APA, 10006/C, Chef de la circonscription de Dschang a Monsieur le commissaire de la Republique Francaise, 12 Novembre, 1923,

<sup>74</sup> Fanzo, "Trans-Frontier Relations", p.198.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p.195.

British administration. These petitions and resistance to the Anglo-French boundary were already indications that cross –border migrations were likely to occur

It was, therefore, no surprise that some elements of the border ethnic groups resisted the Anglo-French boundary by immigrating to the Southern Cameroons. Sultan Njoya encouraged his people to defy the boundary, to migrate and settle across the boundary in an attempt to physically link up with the Ndop chiefdoms in British Cameroons<sup>76</sup>.

By 1918, the strength of the resistance was already alarming to the British and the French. Hundreds of Bamum continued to spread across the boundary zone and to settle on land not originally theirs although with the consent of the frontier chiefs<sup>77</sup>. Many settled at Kwanso in Nso and Baba in Ndop because of close ethnic relations and common traditional boundaries<sup>78</sup>. The situation was similar along the partition line that divided the Bamileke, Mbo, Bakossi and Mungo peoples.

Despite these protests, cross-border migrations and appeals for the rectification of the boundary where it divided ethnic groups and families or the recognition of their established traditional rights across it, the British and French were reluctant to react. Franco-British policies towards the divided groups ranged from cautious sympathy and efforts to unite at least some of them, to outright hostility and rejection of appeals for boundary modification. The two governments agreed that the provisional boundary of the 1916 should be maintained without modification in favour of divided groups until a joint Anglo-French Boundary Commission was set up to review the boundary line.<sup>79</sup> While such a commission was being awaited, the two colonial powers agreed to restrict the authority of the chiefs of divided groups to their respective sides of the boundary. Their authority was not recognized across the boundary.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.268.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.272.

<sup>79</sup>NAB, file Tb/1920/2, The British Resident Buea to the D.O. Bamenda, August 30, 1920.

During the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919, a mixed Anglo-French Boundary Commission was appointed to undertake a careful study of the delimitation line confirmed by the Milner-Simon Agreement and recommend modifications where necessary. In the course of several meetings held by the commissioners, concern was shown by both parties for the possible effects of the boundary on the local inhabitants of both French and British territories. After the commission had reviewed the boundary line, minor adjustments which had little or no significance on the divided groups were made in places, resulting in the transfer of some villages from one power to the other. There was no complete unification of any divided group.

### **Loss of Farmland**

The socio-economic impact of the partition of Cameroon on the border people, were also far-reaching. In the first place, people were separated from their farmland or traditional sources of food. The *Proces-verbal* defining the boundary between Mt Kupe and the Lum-Ngab Road in the vicinity of Loum signed in Tombel on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1929, indicated that some Bakossi farms were cut off in French territory by the new boundary<sup>80</sup>.

M. Chazelas, *chef de la circonscription de Douala*, and Mr. Davidson, the Resident in Buea, signed a *Proces-verbal* on August 9, 1920 defining the boundary in the region of the Mungo River and its estuary. This boundary separated the Douala people from the Misselele plantation and its neighbourhood which was their sources of livelihood<sup>81</sup>. The French had petitioned the British unilateral annexation of the Misselele territory originally placed on the French side by the 'Picot Line' on the grounds that it would inconvenience the indigenes who depended largely on food from Misselele and its environs. The British replied that they would "insist on definite native units being divided as little as possible"<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Weladji, "Cameroon-Nigeria Border", p.245.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 235.

<sup>82</sup> For details see; V.J. Ngoh, "Anglo-French Rivalry over the Misselele Plantation, 1916-1920: A Study on the Economic Motives for the Partition of Africa", *Journal of Third World Studies*, xii,2., 1995, pp.273-299.

The boundary agreement also indicated that the fishing rights of French Cameroonians (east of the Mungo) acquired west of the Mungo before the war, were to be respected this increased the trans-frontier movements of these fishermen. Elsewhere, the Bamileke lost control over palm oil production in Bangwa land while the Bamum were separated from the fertile land of Kwanso. With this lost farmland, many border people resisted the Anglo-French boundary.

### **Disruption of Traditional Distance Trade**

Partition also disrupted traditional distance trade because the powers hurriedly imposed customs formalities at the frontiers and ordered the customs officials to patrol the borders. By so doing, many traditional local and distant markets became strictly ‘foreign’ and were not more easily accessible to traders on the other side of the border. For example, Ndop and Bali traders were separated from their favourite Nkongsamba market and were now facing Ibi and Ikom in Nigeria<sup>83</sup>.

The Bamileke of French Cameroon who traditionally exchanged their meat and skins from animals they raised on the eastern slopes of the Bamboutous Mountain for the palm products the Bangwa of British Cameroons raised on the western slopes were now separated.

Distance trade also suffered because customs officers harassed traders and confiscated their property. For example, in 1949, Seriki Yusufu chief of Mbaw arrested three custom officers from French Cameroon who trespassed to the Southern Cameroons and arrested traders from Bansa and Adamawa en route to various places to trade. The custom officers from Banyo subdivision custom post were; Alui of Manda, Jaboh of Galim, Ngilleh of Duala and Ti of Chongkorong. The traders who included Salimanu of Adamawa and Patrick Tidrou of Bansa were deprived of their goods that included money, trousers, onions, towels, purse, patali, and an ass.<sup>84</sup> The harassment of traders

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<sup>83</sup> Fanzo, “Trans-Frontier Relations,” p.317.

<sup>84</sup>PAB, file NW/pf/d1949/1, Arrest of French Custom officials at Sabongari, p.2.

was common along the borders and this greatly affected traditional long distance trade that existed even before the Germans.

Also travel permits or “*laissez-passer*” were later required for all people entering or leaving French Cameroon. Traders, who could not obtain the *Laissez-passer* because of the cost and administrative bottlenecks involved, abandoned the trade. Again the local policemen and frontier guards extorted money from travellers during their routine checks<sup>85</sup>. Determined Bamileke, Bakossi, Mbo and Duala traders resorted to smuggling.

Kola nuts and livestock were smuggled from the Bamileke land to the Southern Cameroons. Cigarettes, tobacco and textiles from French Cameroon factories were also on the list of items of contraband trade. From the Southern Cameroons, yams, palm-oil, coffee, cocoa and gunpowder and firearms from Nigeria were smuggled in to the French sector. Smuggling was promoted more by the contrast between the French and British economic and trade policies.

In the name of ‘tariff assimilation’, the French extended to French Cameroon the tariffs protecting French industries thereby effectively forcing the Africans to buy French products and to sell their products to France<sup>86</sup>. Consequently, local products from the British sector found ready markets at higher prices in French Cameroon than in British Cameroons. Also, manufactured goods from Europe were cheaper in the French territory than in the British sector. This French policy not practiced by the British encouraged smuggling between the two territories.

The British policy of importing European goods from the cheapest possible sources imposed relatively low import duties but fairly high export duties. This was in spite of the fact that British firms operating in the territory naturally procured their own

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<sup>85</sup> E. F. Gobina, “French Cameroon Immigrants and the Political Development of the British Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961”, DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaoundé, 1990, p. 26.

<sup>86</sup> J.A. Ballard, “The Colonial Phase in French West Africa”, in, J.F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie (eds.), *A Thousand Years of West African History*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1965, p. 449.

requirements from British sources. But, unlike the situation in French Cameroon, there was no policy preventing foreign firms from operating in the Southern Cameroons, and no strict measures were taken to divert colonial trade into British channels<sup>87</sup>.

Cameroonians could buy imported goods cheaper in the Southern Cameroons they could not obtain high prices for their produce. Traders therefore violated custom regulations to sell their goods in French Cameroon where prices were high and buy European goods in the Southern Cameroons. However, African traders in the Southern Cameroons were often more attracted to the fancy but highly priced French products than to the not-so-bright 'firm' and cheap British imports. Therefore, the tendency was to sell African products in French Cameroon and also to buy imports there.

Unlike traditional long distant trade that was disrupted by the boundary, trade in local markets survived and encouraged regular trans-frontier movements among the divided peoples. In their traditional settings, the local markets were important not as places of buying and selling, but as meeting-places for relatives, friends and traditional authorities. From the coast to the remote hinterland peoples of divided groups frequently crossed the frontiers to attend local markets located in the other part of their territory for a variety of reasons. In the grasslands they attended the markets not only to sell or buy a thing, but also most importantly to 'hear' news, 'see' some relatives, dispatch gifts, meet a girl-friend or fiancée, pay debts, settle disputes, and pay respect to the elders.<sup>88</sup>

The local markets also promoted trans-frontier intercourse because these were places where some villagers had organized their thrift or mutual aid societies before the partition. Traditional market announcements from the chief or the traditional council were also made on the market day. These announcements were important for divided groups at this period because they rallied the people as a unit round their rulers, making them ever more conscious of their membership in the group than could be imagined.

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<sup>87</sup> Fanson, "Trans-Frontier Relations", p.320

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.189.

Many people, especially in the grassland went to the market mainly to hear the announcement for themselves and to spread them when they exchange greetings with those who did not go to the market. Market announcements often dealt with such matters as work to be done in the palace, community roads to be cleared, the death of a chief or notable, the banishment of a particular dignitary or wizard, the appearance of evil men or spirits in the society, an impending disaster, the payment of colonial tax, and the cultivation of particular items of food<sup>89</sup>. These were issues of communal concern which made people to frequent traditional local markets regardless of the existence of a new international boundary.

### **Differences in Development Efforts**

Another consequence of the boundary on the divided people was developmental. While the French tried to develop Bamum, Dschang, Douala, Nkongsamba and other neighbouring districts, the British neglected their zone. For example, the French opened several administrative posts all over Dschang, built roads and opened many schools and a health centre. They also provided their Bamileke subjects with trading and agricultural opportunities. Dschang became the shopping centre for the divided Bamileke of the two zones<sup>90</sup>.

On the other hand the British neglected Bangwa. There was neither a government nor a native administration school. The Mamfe District Officer visited Bangwa once a year during the mandate period<sup>91</sup>. The development of Bamenda Division was also retarded because the villages of Bagam, BamumKumbo, and Bamenjong transferred to France in August 1920, had a population of 25.000 people, including some of the best wood and ironworkers<sup>92</sup>.

The missionaries were also responsible for the differences in the level of development. The Roman Catholic parish at Dschang for example, remained the headquarters for the mission stations in

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.190.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p.194.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.22.

Bangwa, Mbo and Bamenda districts for a very long time before the arrival of the Mill Hill fathers in the British territory in the 1920s<sup>93</sup>. Consequently Dschang possessed more catholic or missionary infrastructure like Mission Stations, Schools, play grounds and others than neighbouring Bangwa and Bamenda.

### **Disruption of Community Life**

The separation of ethnically related peoples with the same language, social and cultural norms disrupted community life. The boundary interrupted social intercourse and many people were refused jurisdiction in matters concerning them on either side of the frontier<sup>94</sup>. In the divided Bakossi country, the *Ahon* secret society festivities drew participants and observers from all over Bakossi land. The *Ahon* was an important unifying traditional festivity. Whenever the *Ahon* “Juju” dance was staged, particularly during the initiation of new members, members and non-members came from all Bakossi villages in both British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon<sup>95</sup>.

The frequency of the *Ahon* dance resulted in relatively frequent movements of ethnic Bakossi across the boundary. Attempts by colonial authorities to check such intra-group movements made the boundary very unpopular<sup>96</sup>. Indeed the French attempts to prevent them from maintaining their traditional ethnic contacts with the main sections of their groups left in British territory<sup>97</sup>. During a meeting of the British and French authorities to settle the problem of intra-group movements among the Bakossi and neighbouring groups split by the boundary the French stated that “ in no way were women debarred” from crossing from one side to the other, but that men “

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<sup>93</sup> Fanson, “Trans-Frontier Relations”, p.195.

<sup>94</sup> Gobina, “French Cameroun Immigrants”, p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> Fanson, “Trans-Frontier Relations,” p.179.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



should obtain passes” before crossing<sup>98</sup>. The difficulties involved in migrating across the borders for social reasons resulted in many Bakossi people abandoning their settlements in the French spheres and creating new settlements or homes on the British side.

Partition also placed the divided ethnic groups under different colonial cultural influences. For example, the nine or ten Bamileke chiefdoms of Bangwa separated by the boundary from the Bamileke chiefdoms of Dschang district with whom they shared the same culture, language and social structure and also maintained very close contact.

The two parts of this ethnic group were differently influenced by British and French colonial cultures and administrative policies. While the Bamileke of Bangwa district were administered under the British system of indirect rule and maintained their traditional institutions, those of Dschang District experienced direct rule and severe interference in their traditional institutions, which the French claimed, were not in keeping with French civilization. The institution of chieftaincy, for example, was differently affected. The French destroyed the traditional chieftainship, forced many Bamileke chiefs to abdicate and replaced them with their own appointees, while the British not only admired the Bangwa chieftainship but also protected the African rulers and allowed them to continue to rule their people under the British system of indirect rule<sup>99</sup>.

The French condemned the British policy which protected and promoted African chiefs and claimed in reference to chief Asunganyi of Fontem in 1923 that he was a very mean chief and more over of meaner importance who was elevated to the position of paramount chief of the Bamileke region under British control; under his paramountcy are found chiefs higher than himself, and an appeal court has been established at Fontem under his presidency. This

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Robert Brain, *Bangwa Kinship and Marriage*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p.1.

decision makes him in reality, the unquestioned master of the area and he makes use of these sweeping powers energetically<sup>100</sup>.

The French complained that this differential treatment of chiefs by the British made it possible for the French subjects to wish to be placed under British administration.

### **Cross Border Migrations**

One of the consequences of the introduction of an artificial boundary in Cameroon was the frequent movement of people across the borders. The struggle by some of the divided people to migrate from one section to the other was a result of the inflexibility of the boundary and the different African policies adopted by the British and French in their respective sectors of Cameroon.

If the international boundary had been less rigidly administered and if the two colonial powers had applied the same policies of taxation, labour and native administration, British and French Cameroonians of the split groups would not have felt the effect of the boundary so keenly and would not have agitated so strongly against it. But the French, much more than the British, down-graded African institutions and traditions and applied so many fiscal and labour exactions that many of their border subjects preferred to escape by crossing over to the British sphere of their village chieftdom or ethnic group<sup>101</sup>.

The British attitude towards immigrants from French Cameroon was one of sympathy throughout the mandate period. They rejected the policy of sending back ethnic migrants and of compulsory travel permits for Africans crossing the frontier because, in their view, it was expensive, difficult to carry out, and would limit the right of free circulation in mandated territories.<sup>102</sup> The British held the view that in all but exceptional circumstances it was undesirable to restrict the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> These French policies that served as push factors of immigration to the Southern Cameroons are examined in the next chapter.

<sup>102</sup> NAB, file Tb/1925/1, Resident Buea to Governor of the French Cameroun, October 8, 1925, p.4.

movement of Africans over artificial boundaries when travelling on their lawful occasions.

The British nevertheless, introduced a voluntary system of permit for those of their subjects wishing to cross the border to visit relatives or do business<sup>103</sup> Few border peoples were eager to obtain such permits, particularly since the exercise not only involved a long journey to the divisional headquarters where they were issued, but also the payment of a fee to obtain it<sup>104</sup>.

Another problem was the attitude of the French authorities who arrested, detained and tortured British subjects found on their side of the boundary without permits and tax-discs. This attitude of the French continued until independence and reunification, although the situation in the 1950's and 1960's might also be attributed to the UPC troubles. In any event, the more lenient British attitude towards divided and other frontier groups encouraged immigration to their economic advantage. As will be seen in the next chapter, these French Cameroon immigrants served as plantation labour in the Southern Cameroons.

#### **D. Administration of the Southern Cameroons**

The League of Nations through Articles 22 and 23 of its Covenant accepted the Anglo-French arrangements in former German Cameroon and Britain was to administer its sphere as a class B mandate territory. According to Article 2 of the mandate agreement, Britain was given the responsibility for the maintenance of "peace, order and good government of the territory and for the promotion to the utmost of the material and moral well-being and the social progress of its inhabitants"<sup>105</sup>. Article 9 explicitly spelt out that Britain would have:

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid, p.5.

<sup>104</sup>The system of travel permits was introduced in the Cameroons Province in 1916. Any African who wanted such a permit obtained his village chief's approval at a fee and then the permit itself from a suitable administrative authority also at a cost. See, NAB, file Tc/1916/1, Resident Buea to DO Bamenda, August 5, 1916.

<sup>105</sup> Cited in David E. Gardinier, "British in the Cameroon," p. 524.

full powers of administration and legislation in the area subject to the mandate. This are shall be administered in accordance with the laws of the mandatory as an integral part of his territory... The mandatory shall therefore be at liberty to apply his laws to the territory under the mandate subject to the modification required by local conditions, and to constitute the territory into a customs, fiscal, or administrative union or federation with the adjacent territories under his control, provided always that the measure adopted to that end do not infringe the provision of the mandate<sup>106</sup>.

Given that the British sector comprised two narrow elongated non-contiguous strips of territory with a poor transportation and communication network, the governor for Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford did not hesitate to inform the secretary for colonies that Britain would face great difficulty in administering the territory as a separate entity from Nigeria. The existence of geographical barriers and the absence of roads or railways between the two disjointed strips of territory made its effective administration as a single unit separated from Nigeria extremely difficult and expensive<sup>107</sup>.

Britain therefore divided her mandate territory into two, British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. The British colonial authorities regarded the northern section of British Cameroons as an extension of the Nigerian territory and as a natural part of the Fulani-dominated northern Nigeria<sup>108</sup>. There was also no tribal or political link between the peoples of Northern and Southern Cameroons. Tribal boundaries ran latitudinally and not longitudinally. In fact British Northern Cameroons was part of the Fulani Emirate of Yola established by Modibo Adama as a consequence of the Jihads initiated by Uthman Dan Fodio in Hausa land in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p.525.,

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p.526.

<sup>108</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 3.

The North was therefore separated from the South by its Islamic culture, history, language and religion. For these reasons, the colonial secretary Winston Churchill concurred with Governor Clifford and accepted his proposal that the Northern section of the territory be separated from the Southern portion and administered as an integral part of Northern Nigeria.

While the northern portion of the British mandate joined the British territory of Northern Nigeria, the southern portion became an integral part of Southern Nigeria. By the Order in Council of June 26, 1923, British Cameroons became an integrated part of Nigeria in British Official Records. The reasons for the integration of the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria were contained in the 1929 British Cameroons Annual Report to the council of the League of Nations. Part of the reasons read thus;

...The territory is administered as an integral part of Nigeria although it is not, and will not become an integral part of that country. Its size, situation and be partite sharp preclude it from being financially autonomous if the standard of administration and development would be compatible with the due performance of the obligation of trusteeship. The economic advantages which accrue to such a territory as the Southern Cameroons under British Mandate from being administered as an integral part of its great neighbour-Nigeria-are indeed many and by utilizing the resources of central and departmental organizations of Nigeria, the mandatory power is able to offer advantages to the mandated area which would be impossible to offer to an area under entirely separate administration.<sup>109</sup>

Britain went further in this 1929 report to give the erroneous impression that the Southern Cameroons “represented a considerable annual charge in the finances of Nigeria”. This meant that the Southern Cameroons did not have the economic potentials and was

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<sup>109</sup> British Cameroons Annual Report, 1929, pp. 4-5.

therefore not economically viable to be self-sufficient and to be administered as a separate political entity.

The British decision to administer Southern Cameroons as part of Nigeria was also dictated by British reluctance to acquire the Cameroon after 1914. Britain wanted Cameroon merely as a bargaining chip “in the world-wide negotiations that were expected to follow the cessation of general hostilities after the First World War”<sup>110</sup>.

The British administered the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria in order to tidy up their Nigerian boundary and re-unite the dismembered portions of the Ekoi and Boki tribes to their main stock in Nigeria<sup>111</sup>. This desire was lucidly expressed by Alfred Milner in a memorandum on May 29, 1919, when he acknowledged that:

The territory we have gained, though not large in extent has a certain value in giving us better boundaries and bring completely within our borders native tribes, which have hitherto been partly within British territory and partly outside it<sup>112</sup>.

The reasons for British administration of the Southern Cameroons as an integral part of Nigeria therefore had nothing to do with the well being of the natives even if the British claimed that they expected the Southern Cameroons to benefit from the socio economic development of Nigeria. Only British colonial or imperial ambitions were taken into consideration.

However other considerations included the slender nature of the territory, its scanty population, and the provisions of the Mandate Agreement which permitted such an integration of Southern Cameroons within Nigeria. The integration was therefore effected for administrative convenience. The British authorities found it easier and more convenient to extend their administrative machinery along

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<sup>110</sup> J.Osuntokun “Anglo-French Administration of the Mandated Territory of the Cameroons, 1923-1939: A Study in Comparative Administration,” *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Ibadan, 12.3, April, 1978, p. 257.

<sup>111</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 22.

<sup>112</sup> Gardinier, “British in the Cameroons, 1919-1939,” p.52.

with personnel from Nigeria to the British Cameroons than setting up an entirely independent administrative structure in the territory.

Following the June 26, 1923 Order in Council, British Southern Cameroons became the Cameroons Province under the charge of a Lieutenant Governor stationed at Enugu, Nigeria. The Cameroons Province was situated on the coast between the cross river on the west and the Mungo river on the east. In 1938, this territory had a total surface area of 16,581 square miles and a population of 445,735<sup>113</sup>. The British Executive Officer in the territory was called the Resident Officer. He was responsible for the direct administration of Cameroon but was accountable to the Lieutenant-Governor who for his part answered to the Governor stationed in Lagos Nigeria.

For ease in administration, the British divided the Cameroons Province, a relatively large area with very poor roads, into four divisions-Victoria, Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda. Later the Bamenda Division was split into three: Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe to make six Divisions. Each division was headed by a District Officer (DO) who was assisted by an Assistant District Officer (ADO). The Divisions were sub-divided into Districts, which were headed by District Heads. The District Heads were usually local Traditional Chiefs. In the administrative set-up, the ADOs were accountable to the D.Os who in turn was accountable to the Resident at Buea.

In 1949, the Southern Cameroons was divided into two Provinces. The former Bamenda Division became the Bamenda Province with Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe as Divisions. Mamfe, Kumba and Victoria constituted the Cameroon Province. Each province had a Resident Officer. In 1948, the post of Commissioner was instituted in the Southern Cameroons. The Residents reported to the Commissioner who dealt directly with the Nigerian Government through the Lieutenant Governor of the Eastern region up till 1954 when the Southern Cameroons became a Quasi-Federal Territory.

The Southern Cameroons was inhabited by Bantu speaking people. Along the coast in the Victoria Division were the Bakweri,

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<sup>113</sup> Ngoh , *Southern Cameroons*. p. 4.

some of whom claim a common ancestor with the Duala. According to this version of Bakweri origin and migration, Mbedi, the father of Ewale who is the direct ancestor of the Duala, was the brother of Mokuri (Mokule) who is believed to be the ancestor of the Bakweri people<sup>114</sup>. It is believed that Mokuri, for hunting reasons, migrated inwards and found himself along the slopes of Mount Cameroon where he established his settlement.

Other Bakweri claimed to have originated from Bamhoko while Maumu, another group, claimed they originated from the Longo River in Kumba divisions<sup>115</sup>. Besides the various Bakweri groups mentioned above, there were also the Mboko, the Isuwu (Isubu) and the Wovea who though claiming different origins, had several cultural similarities with the Bakweri.

Further inland, in Kumba Division, were the Balong, Bafaw, Bakumdu, Bakossi, Oroko and the Mbo. In Mamfe Division, the indigenous people were the Korup, the Ejagham (Ekoi), the Boki, the Bayang, the Bauchi, Awachi and Nchumbere<sup>116</sup>. The Bangwa-a group split from the Bamileke parent group by the 1916 partition of Cameroon was also included in the Mamfe Division.

The Victoria, Kumba and Mamfe Divisions were also referred to as the forest region of the Southern Cameroons and were therefore composed of ethnic groups having ancestral, historical and linguistic connections with some groups in French Cameroons.

The grassland region of the Southern Cameroons was the Bamenda Division which was later divided into the Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe Divisions. A number of chiefdoms claimed dynastic connexions, near or distant, with the Tikar; these included Bafut, Nso, Kom, Bum, Fountom, Oku, Mankon and Bambili<sup>117</sup>.

The Nso in particular claimed ancestral links with the Foumban Sultanate in French Cameroon. The founder of the Nso dynasty, Ngonso was a brother to Nchare the founder of the Bamum dynasty.

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<sup>114</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*, p.27.

<sup>115</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.



They are said to have separated from Bankim their ancestral site due to succession crisis. The Bali Chamba, who originated from the Adamawa region, migrated in various stages to the Bamenda grassland where, because of succession problems they split into the Bali-Muti, Bali Gham, Bali Kumbat, Bali Nyonga, Bali Gasho and Bali Gangsin chiefdoms.

Unlike the forest region, the indigenous population in the grassland had centralized political institutions with the chief at the apex. These chiefdoms, especially those with dynastic connexions with the Tikar, had fraternal relations with the Bamoum and Bamileke in French Cameroon. This was the administrative unit and people who were placed under British Administration and who played host to the immigrant population from French Cameroon.



## Chapter 2

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### Immigrations, Settlements and Occupations of French Cameroon Immigrants

#### A. Causes of Migrations to the Southern Cameroons

Several factors led to the immigration of many French Cameroonians to the Southern Cameroons after the First World War. These factors could be examined under the push and pull forces of the exodus. These push and pull forces were the considerations that determined the departure of both the willing and protest migrants from their original homesteads in the French administered territory. These considerations were generally linked to the ills and shortcomings of the French colonial policies and the hope of better treatment the immigrants expected to have in the Southern Cameroons. This was the case because the partition had given way to two different colonial systems. The indigenes could easily escape from one system and seek refuge under the other.

#### **Injury to Cultural Pride**

French colonial policies and practices such as those related to chieftaincy institutions, relocation of settlements and unpleasant forest regulations which hurt the cultural pride of many Africans led to the exodus from French colonies into neighbouring territories in West Africa.<sup>118</sup> In the Cameroons, many migrations across the Anglo-French frontier resulted from the French chieftaincy policy and other reforms in French Cameroon.

The chieftaincy crisis in French Cameroon was precipitated first by the large scale exodus of Beti chiefs led by Charles Atangana to Fernando Po at the end of the First World War. They feared persecutions from the French since they fought for the Germans

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<sup>118</sup> Asiwaju, "Political Aspects of Migration in West Africa," p.89.

against the French. The crisis was sustained subsequently through the systematisation of the French *Chefferie* or warrant chief system. This consisted of the dethronement of some traditionally recognised chiefs in favour of French appointed chiefs. Cameroonians from strong traditional chieftaincies in the Bamileke and Bamum districts, who objected to the French maltreatment of their Chiefs and the creation of artificial regional chiefs over them, migrated to the Southern Cameroons<sup>119</sup>. For example, in 1924 the French decided to break up Sultan Njoya's Kingdom into sub chiefdoms with appointed chiefs responsible directly to the French administration rather than to Njoya. This led to a rebellion in the Bamum Kingdom. When Njoya was finally dethroned and exiled to Yaounde where he died in May 1933, some of his people (nearly 2000 of his supporters) under the leadership of prince Musa Njoya, heir to the Bamum throne and 15 elderly nobles, escaped to the Southern Cameroons<sup>120</sup>.

Apart from the royal family, Bamum dissident groups continued to migrate to the Southern Cameroons under their village or group heads throughout the mandate period. The colonial report for 1926 stated that Chief Njichara of Bangourain had indicated that more than 150 Bamum people left his village for the Southern Cameroons Chiefdoms of Bagam and Bambalang that year<sup>121</sup>. The 1924 revolt in Bamum quickly spread to the Bamileke Chiefdoms that suffered chieftaincy reorganization by the French. In Dschang it caused such apprehension that large number of people entered Bamenda Division and Bangwa District of the Mamfe Division in the Southern Cameroons.

In Douala, the French created 'artificial' chiefs among the non-Douala people especially the Bassa. The villages under the non-Douala chiefs were no longer under the authority of any of the four paramount Douala Chiefs. In addition, the jurisdiction which the chiefs had exercised in the criminal and civil courts was abolished. Betote Akwa the paramount chief of Akwa was even tried for alleged

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<sup>119</sup> Fanson, "Trans-Frontier Relations," p.210.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 271.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p.276.

torture and sentenced to imprisonment<sup>122</sup>. All these attempts to persecute traditional authority and ridicule Douala chiefs provoked protest migrations to the Southern Cameroons.

The cultural pride of French Cameroonians was not only offended by the appointment of 'warrant' or 'artificial' Chiefs but also by the excessive powers and authority attributed to these new Chiefs. They collected taxes for the colonial authorities and often collected more than requested for their personal gains. They recruited labour for the French-owned plantations and often used their powers to conscript labour for their own plantations, which the French had encouraged them to develop.

For example, in 1925 Charles Atangana, a French-imposed Regional Chief planted over four hundred hectares of land as his private plantation and as such had to use his powers to conscript labour for this plantation. He had about 200 policemen who roamed the country and, according to dozens of complaints, forcefully obliged native in the villages to come and work on his plantation<sup>123</sup>. This attitude of Chief Atangana caused the exodus of the Ewondo and Banen people who complained that his men, through the subordinate Chiefs, demanded twice the number of men from the village than the colonial administrator had requisitioned. Those escaping from Atangana's harassments migrated to the Southern Cameroons and to Rio Muni<sup>124</sup>.

It can therefore be concluded that, quite apart from the widely resented nature of their obligations to collect tax, recruit labour and soldiers and assist in population census and relocation, the manner of the appointment of chief which was almost always contrary to local norms, and the over-bearing behaviour of most of these French-imposed Chiefs further compounded the problem. In fact the steady flow of protest migrations especially from the

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<sup>122</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*, p.115.

<sup>123</sup> Le vine, *Cameroons from Mandate*, p.107.

<sup>124</sup> M. Mveng, "Notes sur l'emigration des camerounais a Fernando-po entre les deux guerres mondiales," in *ABBLA*, No 12-13, 1981, pp. 65-75.

Bamileke Chiefdoms, Bamum kingdom, Douala land and Ewondo land into the Southern Cameroons resulted largely from the chieftaincy crisis created by the French and the consequent Cameroonian resentment of this destruction of their traditional power base.

### **Forced Labour**

The Southern Cameroons was equally an attractive destination for French Cameroon refugees fleeing from their homes to escape the French-imposed civil obligations such as forced labour, conscription and requisition. In the Southern Cameroons and other parts of British West Africa, forced labour did not appear to have lasted as long as in the French West African territories where the systemization of it merely led to the adoption of new terms such as *corvée* and *prestation*<sup>125</sup>.

It should however be recalled that under the terms of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations establishing British and French control over the former German colony, both powers agreed, among other things, to promote the material and moral well-being and social progress of the people of the territory and to abolish slavery and compulsory labour except for essential public works and services. In such exceptional situations, the workers were expected to receive adequate remuneration. Therefore, while the League prohibited any use of forced or compulsory labour in Cameroon, it could be allowed for essential public works or services, and only if those recruited for such projects were adequately compensated. But with no agency to monitor the recruitment and use of such labour, or even to determine whether a project was, indeed, essential or not, it was left to the colonial authorities to determine what could be considered essential public works and services.

The lack of clarity in what could or could not be considered essential works or services allowed France to pursue various repressive policies in recruiting workers to carry out many of its economic goals and objectives in Cameroon. Ultimately, such policies

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<sup>125</sup> Asiwaju, "Political Aspects of Migration", p. 86.

contributed to the migration of many French Cameroonians to the Southern Cameroons.

The Southern Cameroons was therefore a harbour or refuge ground for many groups and individuals from French Cameroon who staged mass emigration from their various homestead to avoid the strains of the French forced labour policy. The escape to the Southern Cameroons was much easier for the divided border people than for groups living deeper inside the French Cameroon territory.

In 1924, for example, the French administrator for the Dschang District, Ripert, reported a mass exodus of people from the borders to join their relations on the British side<sup>126</sup>. He admitted that he was forced by such mass migrations to change the labour policy of his district. He reduced to almost zero the quota of workers to be supplied by ethnic groups on the borders with the Southern Cameroons, an indication that he recognized that the exodus was related to labour recruitment. Another border ethnic group that witnessed the same volume of migration due to forced labour was the Bamum kingdom. In the 1940s, the Bamum Regional Chief, overwhelmed by the volume of emigration from his region reported that:

Les jeunes gens, eux, s'expatrient avec la plus grande facilité non plus pour s'engager comme manoeuvres sur des concessions, plus au moins éloignées, mais pour rejoindre des parents et amis et apprendre a leur contact profiter de toutes les occasions ou leurs qualités exceptionnelles peuvent trouver à s'employer. Un de mes prédécesseurs estimait fin 1934 à dix mille le nombre des adultes ayant quitté leur chefferie... Cette chefferie est aujourd'hui passée à trente mille (le dixième de la population). De nombreux éléments sont perdus définitivement<sup>127</sup>.

Some of the Bamum people who escaped forced labour and labour related harassments stepped across the borders and settled in the villages of Bangolang, Bambalang, Bafanji and Bamessing. Others

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<sup>126</sup> Fanzo, "Trans-Frontier Relations," p. 207.

<sup>127</sup> NAY, APA 10788 Rapport de l'inspecteur du travail, M.Avinon.

moved to Kumba and Victoria Divisions and became plantation workers.

Bassa villages in the interior of French Cameroon also witnessed mass exodus because of forced labour on the most publicized project, the extension of the railway from Njock to Makak and Yaounde, a distance of 133 kilometres. The work on this rail line was resented because it passed through an extremely unhealthy forest region that was humid and insect infested. Between 1922 and 1926 the death rate due to this project was too high that a large number of Bassa people migrated to the Southern Cameroons to escape what was known as the “Njock death trap”<sup>128</sup>.

The Yabassi and Babimbi Districts were the most affected. By 1945, the Yabassi population dropped to a third as young unmarried people moved to Douala using the railway and then to the Southern Cameroons<sup>129</sup>. Statistics also indicate that of the estimated 6,000 workers involved in the extension of the *Mittelbahn* railroad from Eseka where the Germans had ended construction on the eve of the First World War to Yaounde, only 1300 were volunteers.<sup>130</sup> That may explain why many of the migrants (Bassa, Bakoko, Duala, and Yaounde) during this period were mostly from areas traversed by the railway.

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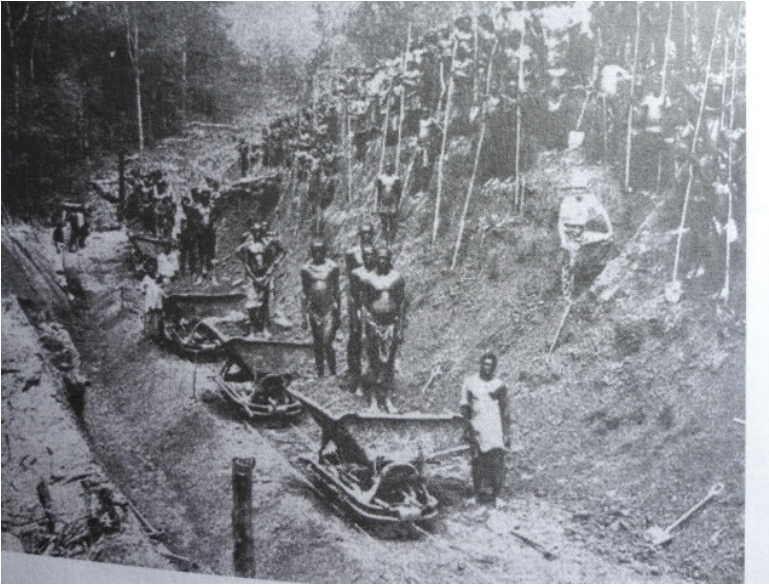
<sup>128</sup> Le vine, *Cameroons from Mandate*, p. 108.

<sup>129</sup> Kaptue, “Travail et main d’oeuvre,” p. 97.

<sup>130</sup> Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, vol. 2, New York, Macmillan Company, 1928, p.323.



## Plate 1: Forced Labour Conditions in French Cameroon



**Source:** [www.peoplesawa.com/images](http://www.peoplesawa.com/images).

NOTE: Picture dates between 1922 and 1927 when the French were extending the railway line toward Yaounde. Indigenes who were not ready to perish under the work conditions escaped to the Southern Cameroons.

Even those who were not directly involved in the construction project itself, including women and children, were required to produce foodstuff to feed the workers. For this they were usually paid below market prices. This policy placed a tremendous hardship on many people and contributed to the migrations to the Southern Cameroons.

In an effort to discourage further migration to the British Cameroons, local chiefs and French administrators pursued a number of strategies, including appeals to authorities in the British Cameroons to help them prevent cross-border movements. They also planned retaliatory measures against family members whose relatives might have migrated. In a letter to the Supervisor of Plantations in

Bota, for example, the General Manager of Ekona plantation noted that four of his employees had complained that the chief of their own town (Manga) near Nkongsamba in the French territory, was against his people working on the plantations in the British territory and had shown his resentment by imposing fines on them and ‘interfering with their women’<sup>131</sup>.

Despite such persecutions and other harassments, forced labour continued to push people out of French Cameroon. Of the nearly 12,128 workers on the plantation labour force in 1926, for example, more than half, 6,321 were French Cameroon immigrants. It can be argued that the large number of French Cameroon immigrants in the British Southern Cameroons, especially between 1922 and 1927, a period in which the French administration undertook many of its major construction projects, was a testimony of the relatively good working conditions offered by the plantation during that period.

The French did not attribute this large-scale exodus on labour conscription, torture, long working hours or very low wages. They explained that the Cameroonians had a taste for wandering life<sup>132</sup>. Despite this pretext, the French colonial authorities responded to pressure from the Permanent Mandates Commission, Britain and the USA by ameliorating working condition on the railway project. However, despite the improvement or amelioration in health care, wages, housing and workers food, labour related migrations continued until the 1950s and more French Cameroonians continued to migrate to the Southern Cameroons in search of a better life.

### **Fiscal Charges**

In French Cameroon, direct taxation as an obligation was generally imposed simultaneously with the establishment of effective European control. This head-tax was imposed on all men and women and in two districts in the North, children over twelve years paid the

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<sup>131</sup> NAB, file Tb 1918/1, Chief of Manga Town near Nkongsamba in French Territory, hostile action, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> Le vine, *Cameroons from Mandate*, p.109.

capitation tax<sup>133</sup>. In 1931, the extension of the head tax to women and children above twelve in Douala, led to the Douala women's' riot of that year.

In addition to the capitation tax, *prestation* was used. It was a system of forced labour through which all the male French Cameroonians worked compulsorily, without pay, for the government for ten days in a year. It increased the Africans' dislike for most of what was French for it was strictly a tax on railway and public works. In addition to the tax and *prestation*, there were other taxes like the trade license fee which was quintupled in 1920 and the medical tax which was introduced in 1923<sup>134</sup>.

Apart from the head tax, medical tax and trade license fee, French Cameroonians had to pay a host of other taxes such as; tax on recruiting labour, hunting, living in government area, enrolment in civil registry, slaughtering cattle, market, landing for ships sailing on French waters, authorization to recruit drivers, indigenous courts, permits to carry arms, passport issuance, right to build in Douala, Edea and Kribi and organizing celebrations and merry making among others<sup>135</sup>.

Besides the question of policy, there were several cases of abuses during the collection of taxes. The most common problem was over-assessment arising from the imposition of obligation to pay for the dead or otherwise absent members of given communities. There were reports of villages decimated by malaria and immigrations for several years being forced to pay the same tax as when the population was much larger<sup>136</sup>. To avoid the strains and harassments which the French capitation policy imposed, or to find the money to meet it, African subjects from French Cameroon often had to migrate into neighbouring Southern Cameroons where direct taxes were low and paid only by male adults and where plantations provided paid jobs.

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<sup>133</sup>Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*, p.105.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Nzume, "British and French Administration of Peoples on the Southern Borderlands" p.117.

<sup>136</sup>Asiwaju, "Political Aspects of Migrations", p.86.

Sometimes it was the chiefs who arranged for their subjects to escape tax. This was the case in the Elong village of Mwangwekan which was cut into two by the Anglo-French boundary. The chief, Ngounte with the bulk of his subjects were placed under British administration while 22 of his people and a part of the village were subjects of the French administration. The administration of this village was a great trouble for the French because each time the officials passed to collect taxes, Ngounte arranged for his people to escape and take refuge in the British zone.<sup>137</sup> They did same for *corvée* and *prestation*. The people did so because tax was higher in the French zone than in the British zone.

Other than the customs, the principal sources of revenue on the British zone were the poll tax, the peddler's license and the Jangali tax. These direct taxes were paid through the village and district heads. All able-bodied African male paid the poll or capitation tax. Exceptions were made for the old and infirm, scholars, policemen and members of the government staff, especially seconded for service in the Cameroon. Village chiefs who collected taxes retained ten percent of the sum collected as payment for their services. The taxation system in the Southern Cameroons was therefore very moderate when compared with the burdensome situation in French Cameroon. It was therefore normal for those escaping from tax related harassments in French Cameroon to seek refuge in the Southern Cameroons.

### ***Indigénat* and Police Repression**

In November 1924, a colonial decree introduced the policy of *indigénat* in French Cameroon. It was a policy that differentiated between the 'primitive' and 'civilized' Africans, the former subjected to the *indigénat*, a policy that gave the administrative officials( *chef de circonscription et chef de subdivision*) the right to punish the subjects without waiting for the judicial procedure. Punishment included imprisonment with free labour on public projects. The penalties

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<sup>137</sup> Nzume, "British and French Administration of Peoples on the Southern Borderlands", p.119.

prescribed by the decree, imprisonment up to fifteen days or fines up to 100 francs, or both, were not in themselves excessive.

What was extraordinary was the variety and nature of the acts that constituted violation under the decree. A few of the violations were; acts of disorder; organising a game of chance, circulating rumours of a nature to disturb the public peace; giving aid to male factors agitators, vagabonds, natives who have fled their village, and all persons wanted by the administration hindering traffic on public highways, routes; vagabondage; practice of sorcery when consequences do not lead to a court appearance; reluctance in paying taxes; attempts to simulate or aggravate natural ills or wounds in order to be dismissed from a public work project; allowing dangerous animals or animals' nuisance to stray or allowing domestic animals to stray on to another's property<sup>138</sup>. These were ridiculous violations that were intended to increase the number of victims of the *indigénat*.

Furthermore, the policy virtually deprived French Cameroonians of that category of their liberty of criticism, association and movement. Cameroonians complained bitterly against this policy and its inhumanity. To avoid it, many people from Babajou, Baré and Bagam crossed the borders into the Southern Cameroons where the British never empowered their agent or deputies to inflict disciplinary penalties for a wide range of offences, without trial. By 1944, it was estimated that 90% of the youths had escaped the district of Bafoussam as a result of the policies of indigénat and forceful recruitment of labour for work on European plantations<sup>139</sup>.

What aggravated resentment against the French *indigénat*, high taxes, *prestation* and *corvée*, was the manner of their execution. Police repression and physical constraints became the most popular and regular means of ensuring compliance with these policies. For example, as a result of the shortage of labour, especially in the plantation zones in French Cameroon and due to massive exodus to the Southern Cameroons, the French instituted a series of measures to check labour movement. These measures were implemented by

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<sup>138</sup> Le Vine, *The Cameroons*, p.100.

<sup>139</sup> Fanson, "Trans-Frontier Relations", p. 362.

the police with exaggerated brutality. One of the measures was the institution of travel permits or *laissez-passer*.

These travel permits were first introduced in zones infested with sleeping sickness like Doume and Akonolinga with the pretext that the travel permits were to check the spread of the disease<sup>140</sup>. This pretext was disproved when the policy was extended to the Mungo basin where there were no threats of sleeping sickness. The *laissez-passer* and work permit were used as travel document indicating that the real objective was to control the movement of labour in French Cameroon. The institution of *laissez-passer* and work permit made police harassment on the highways, towns, villages, and train stations a daily affair. The police systematically checked these documents and detained defaulter. This police repression linked to the *laissez-passer* and work permit forced many to escape to the British Southern Cameroons where such practices were uncommon<sup>141</sup>.

### **The *Laissez-Passer***

Although police repression linked to the implementation of the *laissez-passer* was a cause of emigration from French Cameroon, the *laissez-passer* itself though instituted to check emigration, provoked significant waves of emigration to the Southern Cameroons. As early as 1917, the French forbade all clandestine emigration in Cameroon. By a decree signed that year all inhabitants of old Cameroon (Kamerun) were forbidden to leave the colony without an authorization of the Commissioner or the head of the respective administrative units or *circonscription*. This decree was reinforced eight years later by another.

The *laissez-passer*<sup>142</sup> was initially instituted for health reasons. It was to control the spread of sleeping sickness in the French administered part of Cameroon. From 1923 to 1946 it was strictly implemented in Cameroon. From 1923, there was an arête restricting

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<sup>140</sup> Kaptue, "L'administration colonial," p. 161.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p. 162.

<sup>142</sup> Information on the *Laissez-Passer* has been drawn from L. Kaptue, "L'administration Coloniale et la Circulation des Indigènes au Cameroun: Le Laissez-Passer 1922-1946, *Afrika Zamani*, no.10-11, 1979, pp.160-181.



the movement of the local people and by further decrees of May 6 and November 4, 1924, what the French administration called *vagabondage* was suppressed. What the French administrators meant by *un vagabond*, according to Kaptue was hardly applicable to the African way of life where there was no fixed notion of a home for home was everywhere. The French administration in instituting punishment on those arrested for vagabondage, hoped to maintain the people in their respective administrative units for easy exploitation. The punishment was from 15 days to 6 months of imprisonment. Still eager to maintain the people within their own administrative units so as to have easy and quick access to them whenever they needed labour, the French administration passed a major decree on July 9, 1925 in which mention was first made of the word *laissez-passer*. Article three of the decree reads; “in the interior of the territory, the authorization to move from one’s administrative unit to another... will be done by the presentation of either a *laissez-passer*, or a work permit issued by the administration”. It was either the Governor or his delegate who were to grant this authority and no authority would be granted unless a deposit of 500 francs was made payable on return and a special tax of 25 francs to include a passport was paid.

The *laissez-passer* contained the bearer’s name, the name of his village and its chief, the purpose of travelling and the length of time or approximate duration of the stay. If a European did not sign it, it was considered invalid and the date had to be current. Later, a medical visa was added to it as well as a finger print usually of the index finger of the bearer’s left hand. Despite all these precautions, there were many cases of escape for it was impossible, as the administration admitted, to catch trespassers for according to them, all Africans look alike “*rien ne ressemble plus a un negre qu’un autre negre*”. The institution and control of the *laissez-passer* was one of the major reasons for the constant flight to the British Cameroons where *laissez-passer* conditions were more accommodating.

In the Southern Cameroons, the British also introduced travel permits for Cameroonians willing to travel to French Cameroon. In 1952, the Resident officer published the following conditions for the issue of *laissez-passer* for visits to French Cameroon: The validity of

the permit should not exceed one month. No alterations or erasures should be permitted. The full name, including Christian name, if any, and full address to be inserted. The permits should be signed only by an administrative officer. A certificate to the effect that the person concerned has paid tax in the British territory. Applicants must be natives of British Cameroons or natives of the French Cameroon now permanently domiciled in the British Cameroons and who have paid the current year's tax in the Division or Province. Executives must ascertain in each instance reasons for visit and personal standing of applicant. Old *laissez-passer* must be returned and cancelled before a new one is issued. If the French authorities are to recognize the permits, care should be taken that the permits are not issued to undesirable persons, and that they are carefully filled in. The applicants must be vouched for by a police officer and *laissez-passer* endorsed by him<sup>143</sup>. From the conditions above, it is clear that unlike in French Cameroon, the Africans were not expected to pay 500 francs for the travel permits. Furthermore, it was valid for three years and could be renewed for a like period, giving a total life of six years. *Laissez-passer* conditions were therefore less demanding or challenging when compared with the case in French Cameroon.

### **Conscription into the Army**

Conscription into the French army was one of the policies that provoked protest emigrations from French West African colonies to neighbouring British West African colonies. During the First World War, French conscription of soldiers and the related practice of requisition pushed many youths to move from French West Africa to the British Gold coast where these practices were unknown<sup>144</sup>.

Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, thousands of immigrants came from Yaounde, Bakoko, and Batanga areas as refugees and settled in what was to be the Southern Cameroons as the Allied Powers progressively chased out the Germans. In the Victoria District, the 1916 census identified 25

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<sup>143</sup> PAB, file NW/pc/e 1955/1. *Laissez-passer*, General Correspondence, p.2

<sup>144</sup> Asiwaju, "Political Aspects of Migration," p. 87.



stranger ethnic groups from French Cameroon that included the Banen, Bassa, Bamum, Yaounde, Bakoko, Sanaga, Douala, Bafia, Edea, Mangamba, Abo and Batanga.<sup>145</sup>

These migrants were escaping from war hazards and the defeat of their German friends. These close to 7000 refugees were suspected by German authorities of collaborating with British forces and they had to seek refuge in Victoria which had already been occupied by British troops.<sup>146</sup> Although many of these refugees eventually returned to their ancestral home areas following German defeat in the war, others remained in the British Cameroons and became plantation workers.

In French Cameroon, conscription into the army became more pronounced following the outbreak of the Second World War. When the war started, French appointed Chiefs forcefully recruited youths into the French army. As a result, many young people escaped to the Southern Cameroons<sup>147</sup>. This evasion of conscription in French Cameroon could be explained by the fact that the people were frightened by earlier experiences in forced labour camps and also by the fact the some French Cameroonians did not want to fight for France against the Germans whom they remembered positively following their achievements in Cameroon.

The evasion of conscription in French West African in general and French Cameroon in particular became so widespread that the British authorities in London stepped in and instructed their colonial officials to assist the French authorities. In response, the Resident in Buea informed the Nigerian Government that it would be difficult to render any assistance to the French authorities unless there was a change in the British policy of admission of strangers into the Southern Cameroons<sup>148</sup>. The Resident argued that hitherto, French Cameroonians had been allowed to enter the Southern Cameroons without obstruction and that conscription from which they were

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<sup>145</sup> J., K., Mokosso, "Victoria Division: 1915-1945", Maitrise Dissertation in History, Yaounde University, 1988, p.32.

<sup>146</sup> Epale, *Plantation and Development*, p.67.

<sup>147</sup> Fanson, "Trans-Frontier Relations," p.364.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

escaping appeared to be illegal in Cameroon under Article 3 of the French mandate<sup>149</sup>. With these arguments, it became difficult for Britain to assist the French authorities to prevent evaders from fleeing or escaping from conscription to new homes in the Southern Cameroons where some of them remained after the war.

### **De-Germanisation**

When the French took over the administration of French Cameroon, they embarked on the policy of de-Germanisation. This consisted of the systematic elimination of all traces of the German culture and influence in Cameroon. This de-germanisation campaign was intensified in the 1930s when Adolf Hitler indicated his intention to regain German colonies lost as result of the Treaty of Versailles that was imposed on Germany after the First World War. The German language was abolished in schools, German pictures and books destroyed and German newspapers banned in Cameroon. This policy was not welcomed by the educated elite and many Cameroonians who had served under the Germans and who retained sympathies towards Germany. These German-speaking and German-educated Cameroonians (Germanophile Cameroonians) formed pro-German or anti-French associations like *Kamerun Eingeborenen Deutsch Gesinnngter Verein* (KEDGV), *Kamerun Farbringen fur deutsche Gesinnung Verein* and *Bundder Freunde*<sup>150</sup>.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War and the fear that the pro-German societies might collaborate with Germany for the defeats of France, the French organized a whole scale persecution of anyone affiliated to these pro-German societies as part of the de-germanisation policy. Many of the KEDGV members in Douala such as Manga Bell Mandessi and Harry Munjombo escaped to Tiko, Victoria, Likumba and Kumba where there was no de-germanisation and where the German had returned and taken over their plantations

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 365.

<sup>150</sup> R.A. Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: Social Origins of the UPC*, Oxford, and Clarendon Press. 1977, p.37.

and firms<sup>151</sup>. The rest of the people contaminated by Germanism were molested, imprisoned and some even executed. For example, Dikongue Theodore Meeton was executed on March 19, 1941 because of his alleged communication with the German consulate in Fernando-Po<sup>152</sup>.

De-germanisation was also intensified because the French wanted to destabilize pro- German associations and movements. These pro-German associations such as the Association of Indigenous Germanophile Cameroonians and the Cameroonians of German Thought were requesting the return of the territory to the Germans. The French were opposed for several reasons. They prohibited the drinking of alcohol which the Germans had tolerated. There was unemployment as the French could not provide jobs to the former workers of the German-owned plantations and trade concessions such as *Gesellschaft Sud- Kamerun* who lost their jobs following the defeat of the Germans. Also the traditional chiefs in the Betiland who benefited from German rule and who supported the Germans during the First World War were reluctant to embraced French rule.

The German-educated elite in Douala was too critical of French colonial policies especially assimilation, *corvée*, *indigénat* and *prestation*. Many letters were written by some French Cameroonians to various German personalities, including Hitler, asking them to take over French Cameroon. One of such letters was written by Chief Jean Nyap of Ndogbessol, Eseka, to Chancellor Hitler saying:

*... I was born under your Empire and I am either 35 or 36 years old. I am telling you with tears in my eyes... I very much like Germany. I would very much wish that you return (to Cameroon), French orders are different from yours... I very much like to write more often to you but there is no route...*<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, p. 47. Manga Bell Mandessi arrived Victoria during the war and when the war ended, he started transport business in 1948.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1885*, p.122.

With this tension and following the increasing German campaign and propaganda in favour of the reconquest of Cameroon, the French intensified de-germanisation policies forcing many to escape to the Southern Cameroons.

On the other side of the frontiers, the British did not adopt any rigorous anti-German policy until on the eve of the Second World War. Instead, the German properties confiscated after the war and handed over to the custodian of Enemy Property were put for auction sale in 1922 and 1924 with some German regaining some of the German established plantations. In fact by 1938, there were 20 important German firms and 258 Germans in the Southern Cameroons. That same year, British Southern Cameroons imported 47.57 percent of her imports from Germany and only 11.9 percent from Britain.<sup>154</sup> The Germans were therefore in control of trade, agriculture, plantations, transport and other sectors of the economy of the Southern Cameroons. The German-trained educated elite, mostly from Douala and Yaounde migrated to serve in these German- owned firms and plantations. Their ability to speak and write the German language enabled them to pick-up jobs as clerks, drivers, yard workers, cleaners and domestic servants in the German-owned firms and plantations

### **The UPC Rebellion**

The UPC rebellion of 1955 was a major political crisis that provoked significant population movement across the intra-Cameroon border to the Southern Cameroons. After the rebellion, the UPC was banned and the colonial authorities issued a warrant of arrest for the UPC leaders. The president, Felix Roland Moumie fled with a group of twelve UPC leaders consisting of Ernest Ouandi, Samuel Mekou, Jean Paul Sende, Sakeo Kamen, Martha Moumie, Gertrude Omog, François Fosso, Elie Ngué, Aloys Njock,

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<sup>154</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon History*, p.180.

Marguerite Ngye and Victor Nantia to the Southern Cameroons.<sup>155</sup> These leaders were followed by thousands of other UPC militant who feared political persecutions following the ban on the UPC and its sub-organs in July 1955.

The actual number of French Cameroon political refugees that entered the Southern Cameroons as a result of the 1955 UPC rebellions is not known. However, most towns in the Southern Cameroons like Bamenda, Kumba, Victoria and Tiko received political refugees in 1955. On December 5, 1955, the Tiko UPC local committee wrote to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees that since May 25, 1955 there were about 5000 refugees from French Cameroon in Tiko<sup>156</sup>.

The administration in Kumba also noted that due to the arrival of UPC refugees, the number of taxable males in the division increased. In Southern Bakossi the number increased from 735 in 1955 to 1231 in 1956 and 1354 in 1957. In the town of Kumba, the increase was from 925 in 1955 to 1161 in 1956 and 1217 in 1957<sup>157</sup>. The UN Visiting Mission in October 1955 also noted the presence of an unknown number of persons from French Cameroon, many of them ostensibly as political refugees and considered them to constitute a new element in the political life of the Southern Cameroons<sup>158</sup>. No estimates were given for those who arrived in Bamenda town and it is possible that those who settled in villages between Bafoussam /Dschang and Bamenda were not recorded or even noticed.

Although France eventually decided in 1957 to grant the territory its independence through a gradual and evolutionary process, that did not stem the tide of refugees crossing the border into the British Cameroons. For one thing, André Marie Mbida, the man who had been appointed by French authorities as Prime Minister in May 1957 to lead the territory to independence, refused to even address any of

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<sup>155</sup> D. Pouhe, "Les liaisons extérieures de l'union des populations du Cameroun de 1948-1963," *Maitrise Dissertation in History*, University of Yaounde I, 1999, P.34.

<sup>156</sup> NAB, file Vb/b/1956/1, UPC, p.17

<sup>157</sup> NAB, file Vb/b/1957/3, UPC, p.76

<sup>158</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.12.

the burning issues that had been raised by the UPC. Such an attitude, together with other disagreements with his French mentors, led to Mbida's demise in February 1958. Ahmadou Ahidjo was selected by French authorities as Mbida's successor. Unlike his predecessor, Ahidjo followed a two-pronged strategy vis-à-vis the UPC. First he was willing to discuss the issue of immediate independence and the idea of reunification that the UPC had insisted on, and by granting amnesty to members of the party who were willing to compromise with his regime. The second strategy involved a vigorous military campaign against elements of the party who had refused his offer of an amnesty. Such a policy failed to curb the flow of radical elements of that party to the British Cameroons. It also led to terrorist activities in French Cameroon.

The UPC guerrilla campaigns and warfare in the Bamileke Départements and throughout the Littoral area of French Cameroon between 1956 and 1962 introduced another wave of immigrants into parts of the Southern Cameroons such as Santa, Bamenda, Ndop and Batibo. These immigrants were mostly from Bafoussam, Mbouda, Bafang and Dschang where there was UPC terrorism throughout the 1950s and 1960s. These UPC refugees therefore came to increase the population of French Cameroonians already settled in the Southern Cameroons.

### **Population Pressure**

Population pressure in the Bamileke *Départments* was an important factor in the Bamileke migration to distant urban centres in French Cameroon as well as to the Southern Cameroons plantation zones since the 1930s. The population density in the Bamileke chiefdoms was the highest in the two territories averaging 103 persons per square kilometre by 1960<sup>159</sup>. By 1946, the population density of some Chiefdom in the Bamileke region had reached astonishing proportions. Three Chiefdoms in the Bafoussam sub-division had attained density figures of over 800 persons per square mile.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid, P.12

<sup>160</sup> Le Vine, *Cameroon from Mandate*, p. 61

Annual increase in population was due to polygamous marriages, early marriages and high fertility of the Bamileke women. Between 1931 and 1958 the total increment over the 27 years was about 65 percent. With this rapid increase in population and the consequent population pressure on land, the dynamic Bamileke youths migrated to the Southern forest zones including the Kumba and Victoria Divisions of the Southern Cameroons, where there was ample land.

Apart from the population density on the Bamileke high land, the traditional Bamileke system of land tenure provided for succession of land title to a single heir, usually the eldest son. As such, the younger brothers who were landless had to migrate to seek for the means of survival elsewhere. Even the successful heirs had land disputes with the autocratic Chiefs who often fragmented their land to solve the problem of severe demographic pressure on the land

**Table 1: Population of the Bamileke Region between 1931 and 1961**

| Year | Population | Year | Population |
|------|------------|------|------------|
| 1931 | 345.001    | 1945 | 468.454    |
| 1933 | 364.977    | 1949 | 417.070    |
| 1934 | 369.596    | 1951 | 455.281    |
| 1936 | 383.589    | 1953 | 454.080    |
| 1937 | 394.136    | 1955 | 460.096    |
| 1938 | 415.988    | 1957 | 476.911    |
| 1941 | 430.690    | 1958 | 480.850    |
| 1943 | 460.079    | 1961 | 606.000    |

Source: Adapted from Le vine, *Cameroon from Mandate*, p. 60

Population pressure, the increased fragmentation of agricultural holdings coupled with the diminishing return from agriculture as a result of the intensification of cultivation provoked many Bamileke youths to move to the abundant, sparsely settle and fertile volcanic soils in the Kumba and Victoria division of the Southern Cameroons<sup>161</sup>.

### **Runway Criminals**

Apart from migrations classified under the above push factors, there were various other clandestine runaways including criminals and other fugitive from justice who found sanctuary in the Southern Cameroons. This category of immigrants could be identified by the many request for their extradition that were made by the French colonial authorities in the inter war years. These criminals were people accused either of rape, abduction, murder, theft or slave trading. Some were run-away prisoners from French jails<sup>162</sup>. They easily became permanent settlers because the extradition requests

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<sup>161</sup> Le vine, *Cameroon from Mandate*, p.62.

<sup>162</sup> Fanso, "Trans-Frontier Relations," p. 368.



made by the French were hardly granted, because the procedures were long and complicated<sup>163</sup>.

The British extradition policy was more complicated because the judicial authorities in Lagos had to publish an extradition decision and the accused fugitive had to appear in a Nigerian court for a trial to determine whether there was any case against him. For example, a request made by the French colonial authorities for the extradition of one Foba Ndukum who was accused of rape and abduction of a boy led to his arrest, trial and acquittal in the Bamenda court on the grounds that there was no case against him<sup>164</sup>. Also in 1928, the French administrator in Dschang requested the British authorities in Victoria to search for arrest and extradite a man, Thomas Nseke Mboula, accused of larceny<sup>165</sup>. Thomas Nseke Mboula had stolen 80.000 FCFA before escaping across the frontier to Victoria. Similarly, the British Resident Officer in Buea received a telegram from the commissioner in French Cameroon in 1933 requesting the extradition of a married couple who had stolen money from a European in French Cameroon and escaped to Nigeria.

Apart from the long and complicated British extradition procedures, these criminals and fugitives were protected by their hosts and ethnically related people in the Southern Cameroons who knew that it was not easy for the French administration to reach them. Upon arrival in the Southern Cameroons, many of these criminals also changed their names to escape arrest. With these complications, many French Cameroonians who settle in the Southern Cameroons as criminal or fugitives could not be extradited and they became permanent settlers.

At the administrative level, French authorities tried to convince their British counterpart to take all necessary measures to prevent immigrants from the French Cameroon from settling in the British Cameroons. That was evident in a letter from a French administrative officer to the District Officer of Bamenda calling on the latter not to

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.370

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p. 368

grant asylum to Bamum migrants and for the District Officer to force the chiefs within the border region, including the chiefs of Bangola, Bafangi and Bambalang, not to grant land to Bamum refugees. Also, in June 1924, in a letter to the Resident of the British Cameroons from the Governor of the French Cameroons, the latter suggested that the Resident should help in controlling the migration of French Cameroonians to the British Cameroons.<sup>166</sup> He also suggested that as a means of safeguarding public health and preventing the escape of prisoners from one territory to the other, passport should be required for people crossing the borders from either side. While the Resident may have been sympathetic with the plight of his French counterpart, he rejected the idea on grounds that it would be both impractical and burdensome to enforce. In a lengthy letter to the Secretary of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria dated August 5, 1925, the Acting Resident of the Cameroon Province noted that the real intention of the French authorities was not to protect public health as stated, but to prevent the influx into the British Cameroon of a large number of labourers from the French side to work on the plantations. Concluding his letter, the Acting Resident noted;

...we want to help the French as much as possible, but that we should put ourselves to great trouble and expense to enforce a new system which will react to our disadvantage, is hardly to be expected. We would offer lip service to the scheme, so that, while the French compel natives from our side to have passports, the law becomes a dead letter in so far as natives coming from their side to us are concerned.<sup>167</sup>

In the opinion of the Acting Resident, it was unwise for Britain to bear any additional expenses to control the flow of immigrants across the border. With this British policy, immigrants continued to

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<sup>166</sup>J. Takougang, "Strangers Among Us?; French Cameroon Immigrants to British Southern Cameroons, 1916-1961," in Olufemi Vaughan (ed), *Indigenous Political Structures and Governance in Africa*, Ibadan, Sefer, 2003, pp.272-401. p.384.

<sup>167</sup> NAB, file Tb 1925/1, Passports to Natives to and from French Cameroon, p.6.

flow into the Southern Cameroons especially into the plantations districts.

### **The Search for Better Career Opportunities**

In the Bamileke chiefdoms, polygamous marriages were fashionable and this increased the number of dependents. Due to this and considering other customs like the bride-wealth system, many young people migrated to the plantations in the Southern Cameroons with the hope of earning the often-exorbitant sums involved in the bride price. Others were pushed to the Southern Cameroons by the increasing need of the modern society. Young men who aspired to own modern and good sun –dried brick houses, shoes, gramophones, bicycles and radios and mirrors migrated to the plantation in the Southern Cameroons.

They moved because their labour could not fetch the money they needed in their own hometowns or villages and their life style and standard of living was considered low. Commenting on the search for better life by Bassa youths, Rev Father Heberlé of Yabassi observed in the 1930s that thousands of these youth were not ready to return to their home land if conditions of work and life style do not change<sup>168</sup>.

Many people therefore crossed the border to the Southern Cameroons to earn better wages. This search for better wages was the motive behind the movement of a small community of Duala educated elite who settled in Buea following the transfer of the administrative capital of Kamerun from Douala to Buea in 1901<sup>169</sup>. Perhaps the best known of these immigrants was Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, who during the German administration had served as a high-ranking civil servant in Buea.

The Southern Cameroons also became an Eldorado for these people because of the fertile soil, job opportunities, trade opportunities, British liberal policies and the hospitability of the

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<sup>168</sup> NAY, APA 10388/B, Rapport annuel d'inspection, 1945.

<sup>169</sup> Takougang, "Strangers Among Us? p.380.

indigenous people. As a result many French Cameroon immigrants settled permanently in the Southern Cameroons.

## **B. Immigrant Settlements**

French Cameroon immigrants were influenced by several considerations in the choice of their destinations and new abodes in the Southern Cameroons. These were the pull factors of their migrations and the attractions in the various regions and towns of the Southern Cameroons. Influenced by these attractions and opportunities, the immigrants either created new settlement like hamlets and quarters or integrated the indigenous people in already, established settlements. The factors that influenced the choice of settlements were mostly economic such as the availability of fertile land, job opportunities and trade opportunities.

### **Availability of Fertile Land**

The availability of fertile land was the most important consideration of the immigrants in their choice of a new abode and settlement in the Southern Cameroons. Immigrants from the thickly populated Bamileke chiefdoms where population pressure increased the scarcity of fertile land, choose to settle in the Kumba and Victoria Divisions because of abundant fertile volcanic soils.

In these parts of the Southern Cameroons fertile land was plentiful and population scanty when compared with some part of French Cameroon. The immigrants or strangers were also welcomed in many of the indigenous societies. When the immigrant proved him a good citizen and was amenable to local law and customs, he was assigned virgin land or allowed to purchase land on exactly the same terms as applied to an indigene of the community who wished to supplement his hereditary holding<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>170</sup> Report by his majesty's Government in the UK of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Cameroon under British Mandate for the year 1938, p.34.

On arrival the solitary newcomer could seek the protection of an established resident who lodged, protected and fed him for one season in return for help on his farm or business place and expected a tithe from his guest's first harvest or income<sup>171</sup>. This attitude led to the emergence of French Cameroon immigrants' ethnic quarters or settlements in Kumba and Victoria of the Southern Cameroons.

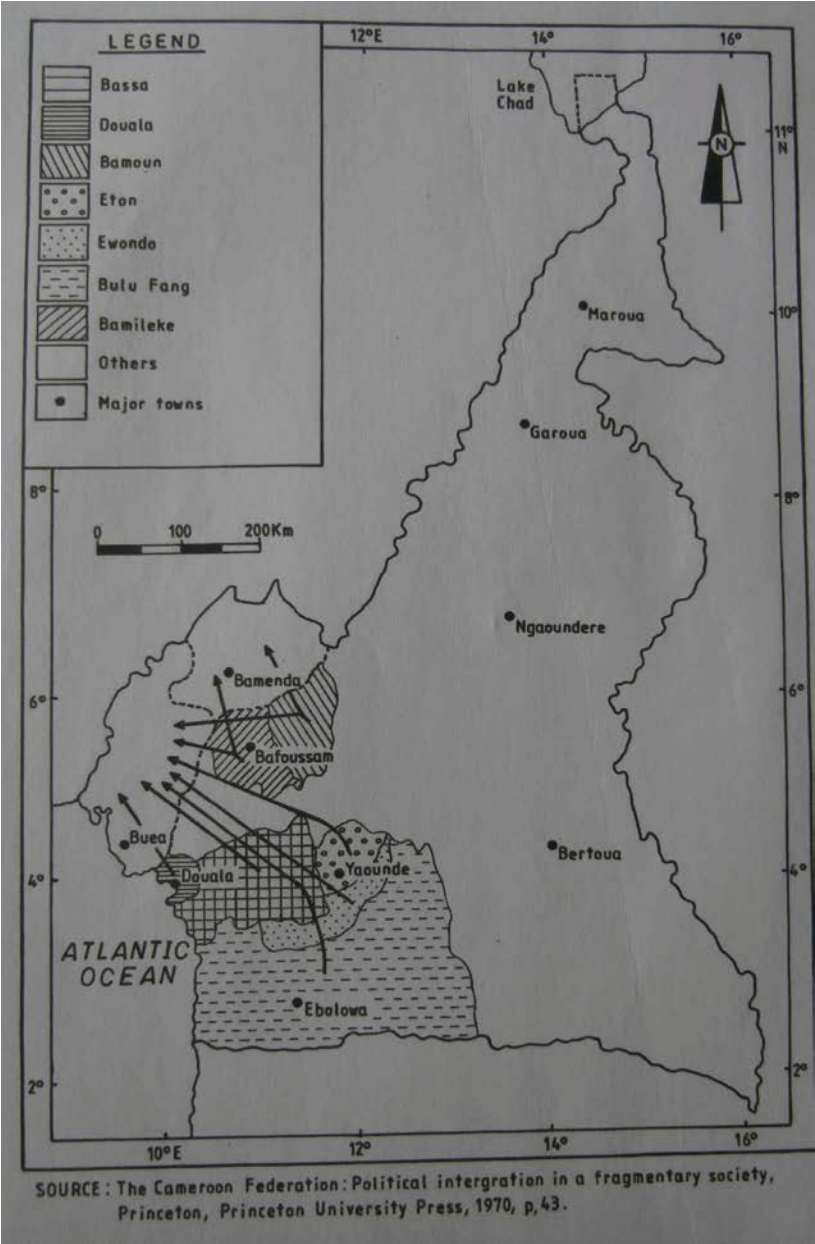
In Kumba Division there were some distinct French Cameroon immigrant settlements, especially Bamileke quarters and settlements. The most popular Bamileke quarter was three Corners, Kumba. It was here that outstanding French Cameroonian farmers like Aloys Nyamsi and Johannes Ngassa bought land from the indigenous landlords and settled as farmers<sup>172</sup>. Apart from Three Corners, there were also other Bamileke quarters in Kumba such as Fiango, Mukonje and Kopenda.

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<sup>171</sup> Wanji Peter, 80years, cocoa farmers, Tombel, 10 December, 2008.

<sup>172</sup> NAB file S1/1953/3, F.C. W.U Petition to D.O. Kumba, p. 2.

Map 5: Migrations To The Southern Cameroons



The importance of land in the choice of the area of settlement could also be measured from the number of settlers and the number of land disputes between the French Cameroon settlers and the indigenous landlords. By 1933, about 169 Bamileke immigrants already had large cocoa farms in Kumba<sup>173</sup>. As the immigrants acquired fertile land for cocoa or plantation and subsistent farming, disputes between the indigenes and settlers became common in Kumba. In 1953, the French Cameroon Welfare Union registered many cases of land disputes involving immigrants from French Cameroon such as Aloys Nyamsi, Johannes Ngassa, Johannes Mbianda, Michael Leyou, Gabriel Kongshua, Ferdinand Duala, Stephen Mbah, Daniel Ndzefang and Joseph Fomo<sup>174</sup>. In these disputes the indigenous people were claiming land sold or leased to these French Cameroon immigrants. These conflicts clearly demonstrate that French Cameroon settlements in Kumba Division were influenced by the availability of fertile land.

Victoria Division was another important destination due to the ports, plantations and fertile land that could provide employment. Tiko, Victoria and Muyuka were the main attractive areas. These settlements were part of the vast fertile plains at the foot of mount Cameroon. In 1926, some Bafia people escaping from forced labour arrived Muyuka under the leadership of Tobias Moudjih, Thomas Ndong, Joseph Ngeben and Etienne Ntang. When they arrived they were offered free land to cultivate and by 1945 when more Bafia immigrants arrived, they formed a new settlement called Bafia<sup>175</sup>. The Bafia immigrants moved through Ndiki, Loum, and Tombel before arriving Muyuka. In Muyuka like in Tombel, they were involved in plantations farming especially cocoa cultivation.

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<sup>173</sup> Report by his Majesty's Government for 1938, p. 99.

<sup>174</sup> For these land disputes, see NAB, file, S1/1953/3.F C W U Petitions.

<sup>175</sup> Ngalame, "Bakossi and their Neighbour", p. 195.

## Trade Opportunities

When the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon was confirmed by the League of Nations, Britain and France hurriedly imposed custom formalities on each side of the frontier and order custom guards and preventive officers to patrol the frontier regularly. This dislocated indigenous long distance trade. As a result, many Bamileke, Bakossi and Duala traders crossed the borders and settled in the lucrative trade centres in the Southern Cameroons. In 1925, an administrative report from Dschang District stated that the Bamileke traders who migrated to Victoria, Buea and Calabar were more and more numerous<sup>176</sup>. In these towns, they found numerous buyers of poultry products and small livestock. These buyers paid prices superior to the prices in Nkongsamba and Douala<sup>177</sup>. The settled immigrant traders also served as middlemen between indigenous and Nigerian traders who supplied them with British goods from Nigeria and the long distance traders from French Cameroon who smuggled French goods into the British territory.

Smuggling was therefore another lucrative activity, which made some immigrants to settle in the border towns of Tiko, Tombel and Bamenda. In 1927, 68 French Cameroonians were arrested and tried for smuggling offences. The number increased to 340 in 1937<sup>178</sup>. Trade, either legal or illegal was therefore an attraction for French Cameroon immigrants because of the high value of the currency, high prices and the profitable nature of smuggling. However immigrant traders did not settled in distinctive quarters like those who migrated to occupy fertile land in the Southern Cameroons. These traders settled with the indigenous people and close to market or exchange centres in the towns of Buea, Victoria, Tiko Kumba and Bamenda.

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<sup>176</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.50

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Report of his Majesty's Government, 1938, p.34



## Job Opportunities

The most important attraction in the Southern Cameroons were the numerous jobs in the plantations, trade firms, factories, ports, forestry companies and other units of production and economic activities. These jobs were plentiful along the coast or in the Victoria and Kumba Divisions than in the Bamenda Grassland. There were therefore more French Cameroonians job seekers along the coast than in the interior or grassland. Indeed, the European and African

Plantations, the British and German trade firms attracted settlers from all part of French Cameroon and West Africa.

The genesis of French Cameroon immigrants in what eventually became known as the Southern Cameroons can be traced back to the German period when Cameroon was administered as a single territory. Like most European powers involved in the scramble for Africa, the main motivation for Germany's founding of a colony on the Cameroon River District in 1884 was economic. Although Germany was initially interested in acquiring Cameroon ostensibly as a market for the sale of German manufactured goods, German authorities soon turned their attention to the opening of plantations, especially when it became clear that plantations could become an important source for many of the raw materials (such as cocoa, rubber, cotton, palm oil, and palm kernel) that Germany was importing from other European colonies.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, the high cost of importing some of these raw materials from the hinterland of the colony, coupled with the disruption in trade that was often caused by fighting between German occupying forces and various Cameroonian ethnic groups made it necessary to seek alternative means of procuring the items. Consequently, the first plantation opened in 1885 as a joint venture by *Woermann*, and *Jantzen* and *Thormablem* employing 17,827 workers on the eve of World War One, Cameroon had the largest land area devoted to plantation agriculture in West Africa.<sup>180</sup> At a time when German control of the colony was

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<sup>179</sup> Rudin, *Germans in Cameroon*, p.248

<sup>180</sup> Takougang, "Strangers Among Us" p.378.

still limited to the coast and its immediate hinterland, one of the major problems faced by the plantation owners was the persistent labour shortage. Although there were initial suggestion that the problem be solved by importing Indian and Chinese workers, the idea was never implemented. Instead, efforts were directed at recruiting workers from various areas along the West African coast, including the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde and Dahomey. But since the cost of importing such workers was so prohibitive and because of the high death rate among the workers, the plan was soon abandoned. Instead, the plantation companies in collusion with the colonial administration turned their attention to the hinterland where there were many workers. A large number was recruited from the densely populated areas around Fombin, Yaounde, Kribi and the Bamileke region.

Distant labour was greatly cherished and used for several reasons. For geographical and economic reasons the plantations were located near the coast, which was relatively more fertile and sparsely populated. Also, the people who lived in the plantation zones had for generations been gainfully employed as middlemen in the trade between Europeans along the coast and the interior 'Bushmen' and were not entreated to Paid employment. Besides, plantation owners wanted distant labour because they could not escape, rebel or go home often<sup>181</sup>. The Europeans also believed that the interior people were more robust and physically stronger than the coastal dwellers. It is not therefore a surprise that in 1925, three years after the coming into force of the League of Nation's mandate, there were 6330 French Cameroonians as against 5735 British Cameroonians and 63 Nigerian in the plantation settlements along the coast of the Southern Cameroons<sup>182</sup>.

A 1927 British report to the League of Nations indicated that the Bakoko, Bafia, Bamum, Bassa, Dschang, Mbo, Mounjo, Sanaga, Yaounde and Vute groups each had at least 100 settlers in the

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<sup>181</sup> S.J. Epale, *Plantation and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975*, Los Angeles, Vantage Press, 1985, p.46.

<sup>182</sup> Amaazee, "Igbo Factor", p. 426.

plantation camps in Kumba, Victoria, Tombel and Tiko<sup>183</sup>. Generally, the immigrants came to outnumber and dominate the indigenous people in some of the settlements close to plantations. Settlements like Tiko, Victoria, Mutengene, Muea, Ekona, Mbenge, Muyuka and Kumba witnessed (great demographic transformation as they increasingly became heterogeneous. In fact, in some of these settlements and plantation camps, close to 74 percent of the plantation workers and settlers were immigrants while indigenous inhabitants constituted a minority<sup>184</sup>.

The return of the Germans to revive and regain the plantation sector and other businesses in the Southern Cameroons luring the mandate period also attracted another kind of immigrants from the French Cameroon. These category of immigrants were those who had received German education and could read and write German. When the Germans took over their plantations and some companies, they began to employ these German-educated French Cameroonians not as plantation labourers, but as clerical Assistants. When the information reached French Cameroon, many German-educated Duala, Bassa and Ewondo people migrated and settled in the Southern Cameroons to serve the Germans as clerks, yard workers, cleaners and domestic servants<sup>185</sup>. Such immigrants settled in Kumba, Victoria, Tiko, Muea, Ekona, Messelele and Mutegene and were close collaborators of German planters and traders.

During the Second World War, job opportunities became relatively many in the Southern Cameroons. When the war started many factories and plantations in French Cameroon were closed down because many able-bodied French people in French Cameroon were mobilized for the war. Many French Cameroonians job seekers therefore migrated to the Southern Cameroons where plantations and factories were still recruiting and paying their labourers<sup>186</sup>. When the war ended and despite economic revival in French Cameroon, many

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<sup>183</sup> Epale, *Plantation and Development*, p. 57.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Fanso, "Trans-Frontier Relations," p. 355.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p. 363

of them remained in the Southern Cameroons because of their jobs, high wages and high value of the currency.

Another project that attracted labour from French Cameroon was the Santa Coffee Estate. Officially opened on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1954 by Dr Emmanuel Endeley, the estate employed about 600 workers and about 500 casual or seasonal workers each year. This led to migrations from Dschang and Mbouda to Santa.<sup>187</sup> Many Bamileke people from Dschang and Mbouda therefore crossed the borders and settled in the border villages so as to take part in Coffee cultivation in Santa. In 1957, another cash crop plantation was set up in Ndu but it did not pull populations from French Cameroon like the Santa Coffee Estate. This was certainly due to the distance between the Ndu Tea Estate and the areas of high population density in French Cameroon and also the fact that indigenous female labour for Tea harvesting was plentiful.

### **Ethnic Ties**

The Anglo-French partition of German Kamerun divided families, polities, settlements, villages and ethnic groups. The Tikar, Bamileke, Mbo, Balong, Bakossi and Mungo were amongst the most affected by the international boundary. For instance, the Bamum were separated from the Nso and Ndop chiefdoms, the Bangwa were separated from the larger Bamileke group while the Wouri and Victoria groups linked together by linguistic and cultural similarities were also separated. French Cameroonians who escaped their homesteads for one reason or the other chose to settle with their kith and kin in the Southern Cameroons.

During the inter war years, large migrations were reported among the people of the Bamileke border villages of Bagam, Baminyam, Bangang, Bafou, Fossong, Ellelem, Fongo-Tongo, Fongo-Ndeng and Santchou to brotherly villages in the Bangwa and Bamenda areas<sup>188</sup>. In 1920, the chief of Babadjou is reported to have pleaded with the French authorities to order the sub chief of Nkwetti and Takinji in

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<sup>187</sup> Gwan, "Migrations in West Cameroon," p.177.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p.186.

the Southern Cameroons to send back his subjects who had sneaked across the border to their sub-chiefdoms<sup>189</sup>.

The case of the Bamum protest immigrants was also interesting. When they arrived in the Southern Cameroons in 1924, the British authorities proposed to settle them in the interior in Esu in the Fungom Native Authority area, due to fear that a Bamum settlement on the British side of the frontier could lead to a wholesale migration from Bamum and consequently boundary problems with the French<sup>190</sup>. This proposal was turned down by Musa Njoya, the leader of the Bamum immigrants. He preferred to settle with his people amongst the Tikar villages of Bangolang, Bamessi, Bambalang, and Bafanji. These immigrants were attracted by the hospitality of these people and the similarities in cultures. Unlike in Kumba and other towns in the forest zone, these immigrants did not set up distinctive quarters or hamlets. They integrated the existing settlements because of ethnic affinities.

Bakossi land also received French Cameroon migrants because of the hospitality of their chief and the ethnic ties with their kith and kin in French Cameroon. In the 1930s Chief Ntoko invited the people of Loum and Nkongsamba to come to Tombel and cultivate cocoa<sup>191</sup>. The chief also invited French Cameroonians from Bafia and Bamileke land. Apart from the hospitality of the Tombel chief, Bakossi people in French Cameroon also migrated to the Southern Cameroons because many cultural and social activities encouraged close relations between them and their brothers in the Southern Cameroons. In the 1920s the French attempted to prevent this Bakossi cross-border cultural intercourse. This attitude made many French Cameroon Bakossi people to settle permanently in the Southern Cameroons. In 1925, for example, between 400 and 500 ethnic Bakossi people crossed the border and settled with the Bakossi in the Southern Cameroons<sup>192</sup>.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p.273.

<sup>191</sup> Ngalame, "Bakossi and their Neighbours", p. 232.

<sup>192</sup> Fanso, "Trans-Frontier Relations", p. 181.

The *proces-Verbal* signed by Chazelas chief of the Douala circonscription and Mr. Davidson, the Resident in Buea on August 9, 1920 defining the boundary in the region of the Mungo river and its estuary placed the Misselele plantation in British hands and indicated that fishing rights of French Cameroonians acquired west of the Mungo before August 4, 1914, had to be respected<sup>193</sup>. Fishing rights for French Cameroonians west of the Mungo and the ethnic relations between the inhabitants west and east of the Mungo led to migrations and settlement of Mungo people in the Southern Cameroons especially in Tiko and its environs. This accounted for the many floating immigrant fishermen in the villages along the Mungo in the Southern Cameroons.

It should be indicated here that the ethnic related migrations were quite significant but unfortunately, could not be adequately recorded or noticed. This was because in many cases, the Bamileke, Balong, Bakossi, Bamum, Tikar, Mbo and Mungo people simply stepped across the border and settled with ethnically related people leaving no sign of identification as foreigners. The settlers also had the same names, food habits, language and cultural norms like their hosts. Hence, the number of French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons was often generally underestimated. Figures that were often published by the plantation authorities were deceptive because they did not take into account those who were self employed and those who settled with ethnically related people out of the plantation zones leaving no sign of identification as foreigners. Again it was difficult to count the floating immigrants who were temporal workers, smugglers and /or fishermen.

In December 1953, R.K. Dibongue president of the FCWU, in a letter to the DO for Kumba, estimated the number of French Cameroon immigrants in the Southern Cameroons at 30.000<sup>194</sup>. Endeley, the chairman of the Cameroons People National Congress (CPNC) in his plebiscite campaign speech in 1961 estimated that there were 25.000 French Cameroonians in the Southern

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<sup>193</sup> Weladji, "Cameroon- Nigeria Border", p. 242.

<sup>194</sup> NAB, file, S1/1953/3, p.3.

Cameroons<sup>195</sup>. Both estimates were quite conservative and based on figures made available by plantation authorities. Many immigrants settled in ethnically related communities where they could not be distinguished. Many were either self-employed or floating as smugglers, fishermen and temporal workers and could not easily be identified. Many even changed their names in order to be accepted by their hosts. Again in crossing the frontiers from the French to the British side, political or protest migrants normally avoided the established customs posts and were therefore not recorded. Lastly, efforts to conduct censuses of the refugee communities in the Southern Cameroons were often abandoned in the face of the difficulty of identifying the migrants from their closely-related kinsmen, who as hosts generally co-operated in hiding their guests in case the head counts led to repatriation. It is against this background that the widely differing and obviously incomplete statistics need to be approached.

### **C. Occupations of French Cameroon Immigrants**

When the immigrants settled, they integrated into the host communities and participated in the socio-economic and administrative life of their new home. The French Cameroonians featured prominently in some areas of economic activities especially plantation agriculture and trade. They were also prominent in administration and subsistence farming.

#### **Administration**

Many western-educated French Cameroonians were employed in the Nigerian Colonial Administration and later the Southern Cameroons Public Service. These French Cameroonians were either graduates from the German schools, the French elementary, secondary and professional schools or British schools as many of them attended St. Joseph College Sasse from 1939 and other colleges in Nigeria. However, in 1951, the FCWU in a petition to the

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<sup>195</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 149.

Governor of the eastern region of Nigeria complained that French Cameroonians were debarred from employment in the public service in Nigeria<sup>196</sup>.

This complaint was rejected by the British colonial authorities who published the list of some French Cameroonians employed by the colonial service by 1951. The publication indicated that the statistics were incomplete because there were indications that more French Cameroonians were working with the prison's department, post and telegraph, police, education, customs and the marine department<sup>197</sup>. For example, there was Dibongue's daughter Genevieve Beseke Dibonge, who was employed as probationary teacher by the Senior Education Officer for the Cameroon Province in September 1939, George Belinga Mbaraga who served as clerk in the Commissioner's office from 1955 and Simon Azu Njosa who worked with the information service from 1951.

The situation and numbers of French Cameroonians in the administration rapidly changed when the Southern Cameroons became a full region separated from Eastern Nigeria and especially when J.N. Foncha became the Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons. This change was possible because Foncha extended the Cameroonisation of the Civil Service to French Cameroonians<sup>198</sup>. Consequently, French Cameroonians had the same employment opportunities and the same career profile in the Southern Cameroons as indigenous civil servants.

Another factor that increased the quality and quantity of French Cameroonians in the civil service after 1954 was the fact that children of French Cameroon ancestry were awarded scholarships to study in Nigerian, African and European universities by the Southern Cameroons authorities. In fact one of the greatest advantages that immigrants from French Cameroon had in the Southern Cameroons was that their offspring were not excluded from scholarship

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<sup>196</sup> NAB, file S1/1951/10, FCWU.p.2.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>198</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 24.



consideration<sup>199</sup>. The alliance the UPC/OK established with some eastern European countries also resulted in UPC/OK scholarships for university studies in these countries. In fact, in the Southern Cameroons and after the ban place on the UPC in 1957, the OK became second only to the government in the training of indigenous leadership<sup>200</sup>. The majority of the OK scholarships went to their followers and sympathizers who were mostly of French Cameroon ancestry.

With these training opportunities and given the Cameroonization of the Southern Cameroons Civil Service by Prime Minister Foncha, many French Cameroonians obtained strategic administrative posts. For example, out of the 14 medical doctors produced by the Southern Cameroons by 1961, nine were French Cameroonians and one of the nine (G.G.Dibue) became director of medical services<sup>201</sup>. Dibue was appointed chief medical officer for Bamenda in 1957 and he even served as a personal doctor to Prime Minister Foncha<sup>202</sup>. In 1955, R. K Dibongue was made Board member of the Southern Cameroons Marketing Board. He later became the first Chairman of the Southern Cameroon Development Agency (SCDA) where he served until the KNDP government replaced him with William Patrick Lebaga in 1959<sup>203</sup>. On April 16, 1960, Simon Joseph Eaple, another French Cameroonian was appointed by Foncha as chairman of the prestigious Cameroon Marketing Board. Epale and Dibue were also members of the Kamerun Society which was the thick tank or brain trust of the KNDP government<sup>204</sup>. Indigenous students of the Southern Cameroons also entrusted the leadership of students association to their colleagues of French Cameroon origins.

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<sup>199</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 197.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p. 204.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p.196.

<sup>202</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 57.

<sup>203</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.94

<sup>204</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons* p.119.

**Table 2: French Cameroon Immigrants in the Administration By 1951**

| NAME           | SERVICES           |
|----------------|--------------------|
| R.K.Dibongue   | Administration     |
| BolongaEkwe    | Administration     |
| Dinesebo Bell  | Administration     |
| Njikam         | Administration     |
| Ebumbu         | Education          |
| Mbembu         | Education          |
| Eyambe         | Education          |
| Miss Ngoo      | Education          |
| Divine         | Education          |
| Elate          | Marine             |
| Epaude Ekwe    | Marine             |
| Sapi           | Marine             |
| Evan MangaBell | Health             |
| Feitok         | Post and Telegraph |
| Ekolo Bell     | Post and Telegraph |
| Joseph Ngu     | Prison             |
| Njikam Paul    | Police             |
| J.B Kabaf      | Finance            |

**Source:** NAB, file 51/1951/10, F.C.W.U., P. 4

As a result, the National Union of Kamerun Students (NUKS) was represented at the 1959 Mamfe Plebiscite Conference by Nchinda, a medical student of French Cameroon origins who was studying in Nigeria<sup>205</sup>. With these numerous illustrations, it is clear that immigrants from French Cameroon played a vital role in the

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<sup>205</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 227.

administrative machinery of the Southern Cameroons and could not therefore be excluded from the politics of the territory.

### **Plantation Labour**

French Cameroon labour was also very instrumental in the development of the plantation economy in the Southern Cameroons. Since the times of the German, the largest source of labour for the plantation came from the Yaounde and Bakoko regions in the territory that became French Cameroon from 1916<sup>206</sup>. By 1927, the Yaounde, Bakoko and Dschang settlers were topping the list of foreign labourers with 2,614, 974 and 447 labourers respectively in the plantation<sup>207</sup>. (See Table 3)

The increase in the number of French Cameroon labourers in the plantation as attributed to the French colonial polices, especially the *Corvée*, *Prestation* and *Indigenat*. The French needed forced labour to complete the Douala –Yaounde railway and other projects. In order to secure this labour, the French authorities promulgated a labour decree on July 9, 1925 prohibiting people from French Cameroon from leaving the territory without authorization. This decree did not change the trend of migration as many French Cameroonians pushed away by which taxes; police harassments and low wages were attracted by the better working conditions, camp life and better wages in the Southern Cameroons plantations.

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<sup>206</sup> Epale, *Plantation and Development*, p. 97.

<sup>207</sup> Fanso, “Trans- Frontier Relations ”, p. 351.

**! Table 3: French Cameroon Immigrants in the Plantations**

| Ethnic Group      | 1926     | 1927       |     |     | 1928 |
|-------------------|----------|------------|-----|-----|------|
| Bikoko            | 1.250    | 974<br>847 |     |     |      |
| Banen end Bafia   |          | -          | 165 | 341 |      |
| Bama              | -        | 26         |     |     | 86   |
| Baduas            | -        | 18         |     |     | -    |
| Bamum             |          | 267        | 130 | 138 |      |
| Banyo             | -<br>2   | -          |     |     |      |
| Babanji           | - 16 -   |            |     |     |      |
| Badi              | -        | 82         |     |     | -    |
| Batanga           | 39       | 13         |     |     | 19   |
| Dschang           | 839      | 447        |     |     | 330  |
| Duala             | 46 22 78 |            |     |     |      |
| Mbo               | -        | 112        |     |     | 34   |
| Kaka              | 2        | 20         |     |     | -    |
| Ngumba and Ngonoo | 7        | 20w        |     |     | 110  |
| Sanaga            | -        | 276        |     |     | 302  |
| Tikar and Yokn    | 49       | 2          |     |     | 5    |
| Yabassi           | 245      | ±3         |     |     | 11   |
| Yeounde           | 3* 085   | 2.614      |     |     | 2>21 |
| Mvute             | -        | 20         |     |     | 35   |
| Ebolowa           | 40       | -<br>69    |     |     |      |
| Garua             | 1        | -          |     |     | -    |
| DengDeng          | 4        | -          |     |     | 79   |
| Bagwa             | -        | 20         |     |     |      |
| -                 |          |            |     |     |      |
| Others            | 9        | -          |     |     | -    |

**Source:** Adapted from Epale, *Plantation and Development*, p. 102.

Unlike the situation in the administration where the quantity and quality of French Cameroon workers increased yearly, the number of French Cameroonians working in the plantations dropped yearly after the Second World War. By 1953 there were only 2000

plantation workers from French Cameroon as against 7000 Nigerians and 16.000 Southern Cameroonians. This drop was due to many factors. Many enterprising French Cameroon labourers abandoned the plantation and created private farms for the cultivation of cocoa and banana following the banana boom of 1950s<sup>208</sup>. There was also the improvement in the social and economic condition in French Cameroon, the influx of labour from Nigeria following the creation of the CDC and the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road, the reluctance of Endeley to include French Cameroonians in his Cameroonization policy and the terrorist campaign in Bamileke land in the late 1950s<sup>209</sup>.

Despite this drop in the quantity of plantation labour from French Cameroon, workers from that territory continued to occupy prominent and influential positions within the CDC administration and work force. For example, Ernest Kalla Lottin, a French Cameroonian clerical staff of the CDC became the vice president of the Cameroon Development Corporation Workers Union. (CDCWU) and in 1955-0he was elected president<sup>210</sup>. Simon Joseph Epale was another outstanding French Cameroonian worked as a senior (staff and in various capacities au the CDC head office between 1956 and 1960. Before joining the management of the CDC at Jota, Simon Joseph Epale had in collaboration with Emmanuel Tabi Egbe published a study in 1950, which indicated that inducement allowance to each (European employee of the CDC amounted to 675 pounds sterling. It also pointed out that it costed the corporation 351 Pounds more to employ one European than to employ a Cameroonian and that the corporation would save at least 22.950 pounds if the number of European employees were reduced from 150 to 100<sup>211</sup>. Epale's study greatly influenced the governments Cameroonization policy in the CDC, His study also focused on the public finances of the Southern Cameroons as he revealed that:

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<sup>208</sup> Alex Njikam, 80 years, cocoa farmer, Kumba, July 8, 2006.

<sup>209</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.92.

<sup>210</sup> P.Konings, *Labour Resistance in Cameroon*, Yaounde, Edition Cle, 1993, p. 113.

<sup>211</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 81.

The territory contributed more than its fair share in respect of certain items of federal expenditure but the percentage of revenue allocated to it was in no way related to the actual consumption by the southern Cameroon<sup>212</sup>.

The revelation on the disparity between the Southern Cameroons contribution to the Federal budget of Nigeria and revenue allocated to the territory affected the political aspirations of the people. With such influence over the CDC and the Southern Cameroons economy in general, French Cameroonians could not be simple observers of the political Evolution of the territory.

### **Trade and Smuggling**

Many Bamileke, Baëossi and Duala people who crossed the border picked up trade as an economic activity. The Bamileke in particular came second to the Igbo in petty trading in the towns of Kumba, Victoria, Buea, Tiko, Muyuka, Tombel and Bamenäa. They owned shops in those towns with their products coming mostly from French Cameroon. Apart from petty commerce the settlers were also involved in long distance trade between the Southern Cameroon and the Nigerian towns of Lagos and Calabar. The major trade items were kola nuts and small poultry<sup>213</sup>.

Trans-frontier trade between the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon was not as easy as the long distance trade between Victoria and Calabar. Bamileke traders, settlers in the Southern Cameroons found it difficult to trade with French Cameroon, their ancestral land, because Britain and France imposed custom restrictions on each side of the border. Trade between the two territories therefore took the form of smuggling. Bamileke smugglers took coffee, cocoa, plantains, yam and palm oil from the Southern Cameroons where the prices were lower to markets in Nkongsamba, Loum Mbanga and Douala where they obtained better prices<sup>214</sup>.

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p.168

<sup>213</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 90.

<sup>214</sup> Fanso, "Trans-Frontier Relations", p. 331.

From French Cameroon, they smuggled contraband good such as tobacco, cigarettes, cigar and hot drink to the Southern Cameroons. In their effort to escape arrest, smugglers carried goods across the frontier at night and through secret bush track where they could not be spotted by customs agent or members of the preventive police. Bamileke smugglers went as far as using border female cultivators to transport contraband goods in their farm basket and bags in broad daylight as if they were carrying their harvest back home<sup>215</sup>

With these strategies, smuggling and the number of smugglers continued to increase yearly. Smuggling also increased because it was a lucrative business as smugglers became rich in money and property<sup>216</sup>. Again during the trusteeship period, coffee and cocoa smuggling by Bamileke and Bakossi traders and farmers increased due to price differentials between the two territories. Contraband trade in cocoa and coffee from the Southern Cameroon fetched a lot of money in French Cameroon<sup>217</sup>.

**Table 4: Smuggling Between the Two Cameroons**

| Seizures                                | 1937  | 1938      |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| Tobacco (pounds)                        | 2.801 | 11.763    |
| Cigarettes (number)                     | 8.725 | 12.963    |
| Cigar (number)                          | -     | 49        |
| Total duty value in pounds              | 312   | 1.191     |
| Proceeds of sales in Pounds             | 141   | 252       |
| Persons convicted of smuggling offences | 340   | 293       |
| Fines paid by persons so convicted.     | 463sd | 17710, gd |

**Source:** Report by His Majesty's Government, 1938, p. 34.

It is obvious therefore that those French Cameroon settlers who were petty traders, long distance traders and smugglers in the

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, p. 336.

<sup>216</sup> Ngalame, "Bakossi and their Neighbours", p. 231.

<sup>217</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 90.

Southern Cameroons were influential people because of their wealth and property. Given their economic power, they certainly asked for political powers commensurate with their economic influences.

### **Farming**

A reasonable number of French Cameroon settlers benefited from the fertile volcanic soils in the Kumba and Victoria Divisions to carry out both commercial and subsistence farming. Many of them carried out large-scale cocoa and coffee cultivation. By 1933 about 169 French Cameroonians already had large cocoa farms in Kumba Division<sup>218</sup>. After the Second World War and following the creation of the CDC in 1946 and the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road, there was an influx of Nigerian immigrants to the Southern Cameroons. As a result, most French Cameroonians decided to quit the plantation. Rather than sell their labour cheaply to the CDC, they started their own farms, which became more profitable. This increased the output of cocoa and coffee independently grown in the cultivation of oranges, palm products, banana, plantains, mangoes, pineapple, rubber and plums<sup>219</sup>.

In the domain of subsistence farming, many settlers made efforts to feed their off-springs by cultivating food crops such as coco yams, beans, corn, plantains and cassava. In the fertile Ndop plain, Bamum settlers cultivated corn and ventured into fishing in the Noun River. The Bakoko along the coast distinguished themselves as palm wine tappers. This was both for consumption and for commercial purposes. The Ewondo, Bakoko, Bafia who retired from the plantation and forestry companies acquired land and settled in Tombel as small scale peasants or cash crop farmers<sup>220</sup>. The Duala and Mungo were excellent fishermen along the Mungo River; French Cameroon Settlers therefore appeared to be rich and self-sufficient farmers. With sufficient food and a stable economic climate, they

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<sup>218</sup> His Majesty's Report, 1938, p. 99.

<sup>219</sup> NAB, file 51/1953/3, p. 3.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.



could afford to venture into the politics of the territory in order to guarantee their investment in agriculture.

### **Lumbering**

The Ewondo-Eton and Bafia settlers dominated this activity completely ignored by the indigenous people. Although most of them arrived in the Southern Cameroons as palm kernel, groundnuts and dried fufu traders, they settled as self-employed people in the lumbering sector. Apart from felling trees, they started the ‘deforestation’ of Mutengene, Tiko, Muyuka, Likomba and Tombel, which became settlements. Since they were good in lumber –related activities, most of them were employed by forest exploitation companies like the Kamerun Elisebahn Gesellschaft, the Mungo river timber company and the *société Agricole et forestier Amical* (SAFA) in the 1930s and 1940s<sup>221</sup>.

The Ewondo-Eton sawyers also played a vital role in the development of plantation agriculture because they were paid to fell trees in the newly opened cocoa farms. This was the case in Kumba, Tobel, Ebonji and Nguti<sup>222</sup>. They also served as plantation labourers in some private plantations. The Ewondo were also good in tapping palm wine and trapping animals. These occupations enabled them to integrate the indigenous communities, which accepted them as important socio- economic parties. It did not take long for the socially and economically accepted Ewondo settlers to seek for franchise in the Southern Cameroons.

The Anglo- French partition of Cameroon and the eventual ills of the French colonial policies therefore forced many discontented French Cameroonians to migrate to the Southern Cameroons. The appointment of chiefs, high taxes, forced labour, assimilation, *indigénat*, *prestation*, police harassments, the *laissez-passer* and conscription into the army were unbearable policies. The Africans who had experienced German rule were also dissatisfied with the pace of socio-economic development in French Cameroon. These

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<sup>221</sup> Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p. 63.

<sup>222</sup> Ngalame, “Bakossi and their Neighbours”, p. 197.

pro-Germans were constantly harassed as the French carried out a vigorous de-germanisation policy. They found new abodes in the territory because of the ethnic and historical links with the border peoples and the jobs in the plantations. The Bamoum, Bamileke, Mbo, Bakossi, Balong and Duala who crossed the new borders were virtually at “home” with their kin and kith. The jobs in the plantations and the ports in the Southern Cameroons were more lucrative. This attracted the Bassa, Ewondo, Bafia and Batanga who were victims of forced labour, *indigénat* and *prestation* in French Cameroon. Trade in the towns of Tiko, Kumba, Victoria, Muyuka, Buea and Bamenda was more profitable. Contraband trade also pulled many frontier settlers into the Southern Cameroons because trade restrictions between the two territories and the high customs duties made smuggling profitable.

The immigration of French Cameroonians to the Southern Cameroons was therefore influenced by the political repression in French Cameroon and the attractive opportunities in the host territory. When they arrived, they settled in “stranger communities” creating “stranger quarters” in most of the towns in the Southern Cameroons. For example, the Bassa families of Logkot, Nyang, Nyambal, Log Bisangli and Bikok are known to have started the Isokolo settlement in Victoria while the Bamileke started the Babute or stranger quarters and the Duala the Great Soppo quarters all in Buea.<sup>223</sup>

When these “strangers” had settled, some of them became prosperous businessmen and farmers. Others like Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and Ernest Kalla Lottin occupied influential administrative posts; the settlers also began to organize themselves into association and pressure groups in order to request political integration and recognition. Many of the settlers started struggling to emerge as political leaders in the territory.

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<sup>223</sup> Gobina, “French Cameroun Immigrants”, p.43.

## Chapter 3

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### Social Life among French Cameroon Immigrants

#### A. French Cameroonian Associations

The immigrants did not only settle in distinctive communities or quarters, they also grouped themselves in tribal and self-help associations. The most important immigrant social or cultural groups were the following;

##### **The SOLIBABI or Bassa Tribal Union**

The Babimbi District was one of the major victims of the French policy of forced labour. The French used all means to recruit labour from the interior of this Bassa land for the construction of the Njock-Yaounde railway. Also, a decree signed on August 8, 1924 on *indigenat* that provided punishment for all who did not enrol in the French army, pay tax or perform forced labour affected many people of the district. As such many Babimbi escaped to the Southern Cameroons where there was no forced labour<sup>224</sup>. They worked in German plantation and later in the CDC. These workers created the SOLIBABI in 1948.

It all started in 1947 when a general assembly of the Babimbi people in the Diaspora held in Ngambe<sup>225</sup>. Amongst the close to 400 delegates were Babimbi sons and daughters living in the Southern Cameroons. At the end of the come-together, the delegates from the Southern Cameroons were asked to create the SOLIBABI in the Southern Cameroons<sup>226</sup>. In 1948, the Babimbi in the Southern Cameroons assembled in Tiko where they created the Bassa Tribal Union or SOLIBABI. Joseph Ndoh was elected president –

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<sup>224</sup> D. Mokam, “Les associations régionales,” p. 149.

<sup>225</sup> NAY, 2AC 132, Union Tribale Babimbi, p.9.

<sup>226</sup> Mokam, “Les associations régionale”, p.149

coordinator<sup>227</sup>. Several branches were sent up in Mpondo, Mulumdo, Mokondange, Sasse, Ekona, Victoria, Misselele, Likomba and Muyuka.

The objectives of the SOLIBABI were many and largely socio-cultural. The association had to promote the welfare of Babimbi people, offer financial assistance to members in case of death, poor health or accident. Widows and orphans were also protected and supported through education of orphans. The Solibabi also offered assistance to new immigrants from Ngambe and helped them to integrate the new society<sup>228</sup>. The Solibabi also had to work for the political, economic and social advancement of Babimbi. The Babimbi Subdivision was one of the most enclaved in French Cameroon with very few access roads and institutions of learning.

Each branch president served as a liaison officer between the colonial officials and the Bassa people within his branch area and between the Native Authorities and his people. Meetings of the branches were regular at three times a month. The association was opened to all Babimbi, their wives and foreigners who accepted to naturalize<sup>229</sup>. Each member paid an admission fee which varied depending on the sex. It should be noted that not all Bassa people were members.

With this association, it was difficult for the Babimbi people to limit their objectives to their social and cultural welfare. They faced many problems in their new homes. These included taxes, jobs, and scholarship for their kids and the right or not to vote and be voted. With these problems, they ventured into the politics of the Southern Cameroons as individuals and as Solibabi members. This was not strange given that the SOLIBABI or *Solidarité Babimbi* started as a subsidiary and complementary organization of the UPC party<sup>230</sup>. As a subsidiary organ of the UPC, the SOLIBABI like the *les Amis du Progrès*, *L'Union démocratique des femmes Camerounaise*, *La voix du peuple*

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<sup>227</sup> NAB, file S1/1935/1 Native societies, organization and institutions, Victoria Division 1935, p. 149

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, p.50.

<sup>229</sup> Mokam, "Les associations régionales", p. 151.

<sup>230</sup> Le Vine, *Cameroons from Mandate*, p. 148.

*Bafia, La Jeunesse Démocratique Camerounaise, Amis des Nation Unies* and other sub organs served as propaganda vehicles and petition-writing agencies for the UPC.<sup>231</sup>

The SOLIBABI was too critical of the French policies of forced labour, *prestation*, *indigénat* and conscription. Their petitions centred of these colonial policies and the call for the respect of the Trusteeship Agreement. This was certainly the way Babimbi leaders in the Southern Cameroons participated in the political activities of their host territory.

### **The Bamileke Welfare Union**

The Bamileke people were amongst the many French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons. It should be recalled that the Anglo-French boundary divided the Bamileke people placing more than 20.000 of them within the Southern Cameroons. Many amongst the majority in the French Cameroon migrated and settled with their ethnically related peoples in the Southern Cameroons.

Like the SOLIBABI, the origin of the Bamileke Welfare Union or Bamileke Tribal Association could also be traced form the French policies of forced labour, *indigénat*, *prestation*, corporal punishment, conscription into the army and police repression which forced many to escape to the Southern Cameroons. When they settled as traders, plantation labourers and smugglers they founded the union in the 1940's<sup>232</sup>.

According to a letter addressed to the District Officer for Victoria and signed by Sam Tany and G. N. Chasma, the Bamileke Union was later recognized by the Nigerian administration in November 1958<sup>233</sup>. The union comprised 11 Bamileke tribes and was started in Victoria. It was not a political union, but a cultural one

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants", p. 60.

<sup>233</sup> NAB, file V.3641, Bamileke Union, Victoria, p.1. It is very likely that BIU which was limited to Bamileke people from the Bamboutos later expanded into the Bamileke union involving Bamileke people from all the five Bamileke Divisions in French Cameroon.

formed to help its member economically, educationally, social and morally<sup>234</sup>.

The Bamileke Welfare Union catered for the interest and welfare of its members and the entire Bamileke elements resident as settlers in the Southern Cameroons. New comers were assisted to locate homes and acquire jobs. Financial assistance was given to needy member especially for business and education while moral and financial help was also allocated for the sick, bereaved, jailed and victims of some form of misfortune. The union acted as an intermediary between Bamileke element and the administration or Native Authority<sup>235</sup>.

The Bamileke Welfare Union also had a judiciary functions as it settled disputes between its members. These disputes included the non-respect for traditional hierarchy, marital conflicts, land disputes, trade disputes and issues of witchcraft. In each community, Victoria, Tiko, Kumba or Bamenda, the elders or elected executive served as a council that listened to the protagonists and settled their differences according to Bamileke native laws and customs<sup>236</sup>.

Besides settling disputes, the Bamileke Welfare Union was more popular for providing money, material assistance to its members for trade. A year following the creation of the union, a financial credit scheme was set up to grant credit or loans to those Bamileke people wishing to invest in trade. Among the beneficiaries were traders in Kumba, Victoria, Buea, Tiko and Bamenda. In Buea for instance, Mr. Isidore Tagu, Mr. Gabriel Hoho and Mr. Simon were successful businessmen due to loans from this financial credit scheme<sup>237</sup>.

The union also encouraged Bamileke people in the various towns to set up thrift and loan schemes popularly called *njangi*. These *njangi* groups funded the projects of its members as the groups mobilized capital for business persons who were members and contributing regularly. For example, Paul Sinju who arrived Tiko in 1939 as a

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p. 61.

baby-seater, contracted a loan from the Bamileke *njangi* and started the first popular bar and store in Tiko by 1952. This was the famous Bamileke Bar and store which became a big centre of entertainment and relaxation for workers in Tiko<sup>238</sup>. Many Bamileke people prospered in the Southern Cameroons thanks to these thrift and loans schemes that were a source of capital for their businesses.

As the union became popular, its executive members, Sam Tanyi, president and G. N. Chasma, Secretary wrote to the administration requesting the appointment of tax collectors and council representative from the Bamileke community. A Bamileke tax collector could help in tax assessment amongst the Bamileke taxpayers. A councillor with the Victoria and Kumba Native Councils could enable the indigenous people to understand the differences between Bamileke customs and indigenous customs<sup>239</sup>. Bamileke quarters were requested and the need for a Bamileke tribal head to be appointed to cater for a minimum number of 40 Bamileke who hailed from the five divisions<sup>240</sup>. The duty of such quarter heads was to keep records of Bamileke elements showing name, place of residence, date of arrival, length of stay in the place, signature of person, sex and status of immigrant concerned<sup>241</sup>. These Bamileke quarter heads were proposed by the members of the Bamileke Welfare Union from each of the Bamileke districts.

Membership into the union was open to all Bamileke elements. Every member upon admission had to be enrolled in the nominal roll and given a registration card showing his or her names, hometown, administrative division, occupation and place of residence. Every application for membership was accompanied by an admission fee and paid through their financial secretary to the treasurer. Members paid monthly subscription and other levies that were imposed by the executive committee. Members could be admitted into the union

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<sup>238</sup> Soh, *Paul Sinju. The Business Tycoon: How he Rose to Prominence*, Bamenda, T.Tam Printers, 2002, p.67.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>240</sup> The five Bamileke Divisions in French Cameroon were: Dschang, Bafang, Bangante,, Bafoussam, Mbouda.

<sup>241</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p.62.

directly or through the branches. The branches were the union of each of the Bamileke village group<sup>242</sup>. Members, who had not paid monthly subscription for a period of twelve months, were not able to vote or even speak during the unions deliberations.

The government or supreme authority of the union was the annual convention, which decided broad questions or policies and referred them to the executive committee for further actions. The annual conventions were usually in November in a place determined by the executive committee. It brought together all officers of the executive committee and the secretaries of each branches and one branch member. The annual convention deliberated on all issues affecting the Bamileke people. These problems were many and some necessitated political action. This pushed the Bamileke people to demand the franchise.

### **The French Cameroon Welfare Union (FCWU)**

The French Cameroon Welfare Union started off as a body grouping Duala immigrants domiciled in British Southern Cameroons. It was formed in August 1948 by the Douala elements of French Cameroon origin resident particularly in Tiko and Likomba<sup>243</sup>. The Union leadership was conferred on Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue with the dual purpose of mobilizing the Duala in the Southern Cameroons and spreading the idea of reunification<sup>244</sup>. Later the union transformed from a tribal body catering only for the interest of the Douala people to include all French Cameroonians resident in the Southern Cameroons.

Like the SOLIBABI, the FCWU originated from the desire by the numerous French Cameroon plantation workers, smugglers, and traders to come together and protect their interest as strangers in the Southern Cameroons. Unlike the Solibabi or the Bamileke Welfare Union where membership was limited to villages or tribes, membership with the FCWU was extended to all ethnic groups east

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<sup>242</sup> Isidore Tagu, 84 years, Trader, Buea, 16 March, 2008.

<sup>243</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p. 63.

<sup>244</sup> Le vine, *Cameroons*, p. 147.



of the Mungo. Each member paid annual dues and other contributions that were deemed necessary by the association. Wives of members and offspring of members were considered members of this association<sup>245</sup>.

With headquarters in Victoria, the FCWU had branches in Kumba, Tiko, Muyuka, Bamenda and Tombel. The President-General, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was a German-educated Duala who left Douala in 1918 and moved to the Southern Cameroons. He eventually joined the Nigerian civil service becoming an assistant chief clerk at Buea in 1937 and a chief clerk in Enugu in 1944. He returned to Douala in 1947 and in 1949 he moved to Buea where he became the chairman of the FCWU<sup>246</sup>. He was assisted by, a Secretary General Samuel K. Mbame. Apart from the secretary general, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was also working with a financial secretary and a treasurer.

Between 1949 and 1953, the branches and central administration of the FCWU were quite functional with regular meetings, petitions to the colonial administrator and the UN on the conditions and aspirations of French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons. The Kumba branch under Joseph Henry Ngu was the most active as its members, traders and farmers faced many problems in Kumba Division<sup>247</sup>.

The objectives of the FCWU were many and largely socio-cultural. The association had to promote the welfare of French Cameroonian immigrants, offer financial assistance to members in case of death, poor health, accident, harassment by tax and customs officials, and repatriation. Widows and orphans were also protected and supported through education of orphans. The FCWU also had arbitration or even judicial function because the constitution indicated that:

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<sup>245</sup> The FCWU started as the French Cameroon Welfare Association before changing to Union. See Le vine, p. 147.

<sup>246</sup> Le Vine and R. P. Nye, *Historical Dictionary of Cameroon*, New Jersey, The Scarecrow press, 1974, p.35.

<sup>247</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants", p. 64.

If a dispute arises between two members of the union, it should first be brought before the union for arbitration. In the event of a disputant not being satisfied with the settlement arrived at by the union, he is at liberty to seek remedy in the law courts<sup>248</sup>.

With the decline in the activities of the FCWU, Mr. G.V Toko formed the French Element Welfare Union (FEWU) or the Eastern Kamerun Welfare Union (EKWU) in Likomba, Tiko in September 1954<sup>249</sup>. It was a social and to some extent political organization of the eastern people resident in the Southern Cameroons. According to the organizer, G.V. Toko in a letter of 22 September 1954 to the Commissioner of the Cameroons, the FCWU was formed to discuss with the authorities on;

Whether French Cameroonians resident in the British Cameroons have right of voting in public elections, or be voted in any legislative assembly in the British Cameroons. Whether they are franchised to become members in the Cameroon territorial legislature, Native or local Authorities. Whether they have an exclusive right to practice politics in any sphere of the British Cameroons or Nigeria. Whether they are entitled to scholarship awards within the British Cameroon, Nigeria, or overseas<sup>250</sup>.

From the objectives and ambitions of the FCWU, the union was more interested in the political future of the French Cameroonians than the FCWU. However the problems that confronted French Cameroonians and that the pressure groups were created to handle were not only political. Many were cultural and socio- economic.

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<sup>248</sup> NAB, file S1 (1953) 3, FCWU, p.3.

<sup>249</sup> NAB file SI (1959)5, FEWU, p. 2.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

## B. Problems of French Cameroon Immigrants

As strangers in the Southern Cameroons, French Cameroonians certainly had problems integrating into the economic, cultural and socio-political life styles of the territory. Their major problems were:

### Land Disputes

When the immigrants reached the Southern Cameroons, their major problem was the lack of adequate accommodation and land for farming. There were no resettlement homes erected for the immigrants. They were not allowed or granted permission to reside in native quarters. To further aggravate the situation, immigrants were not initially allowed to buy land or either to build or farm permanently. This restriction was based on the existing land tenure systems<sup>251</sup>.

Ownership of all land in the Southern Cameroons whether occupied or not, was vested in the chief or the village community. This was acquired either from the right of conquest or from first occupation of the hitherto uninhabited country, or through long and uncontested use<sup>252</sup>. The chief or community redistributed this land to families and it was occupied and passed to their heirs according to traditional laws and customs.

During the colonial period, this system changed along the coast. This was caused by the plantation or cash crop economy and the settlement of "strangers". From 1922 the British encouraged the stranger African to settle and to occupy land not only for subsistence use but also for the growing of plantation crops. Also, strangers who demonstrated good morals, loyalty, and respect for native customs, were granted permission to buy and own land. Such permissions came from the chiefs, traditional councils or indigenous people.

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<sup>251</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p. 47.

<sup>252</sup> C.K Meek, *Land Tenure and Land Administration in Nigeria and Cameroon*, London, 1957, p. 383.

The change of policy by the Chiefs especially of the coastal and or forest zone attracted many French Cameroonians to establish commercial and subsistence farms on the volcanic soils of the Victoria and Kumba Divisions. By 1933 about 169 French Cameroon settlers already had large Cocoa farms in Kumba Division. In Kumba, more than any other division, the attractive Cocoa enterprises lured many from French Cameroon and land disputes once rare in the division, became frequent in the 1930's<sup>253</sup>. Early inhabitants of the division looked upon the Cocoa-enticed immigrants less favourably because immigrant farmers encroached upon their already diminishing land.

The indigenous people argued that if they permitted strangers to plant Cocoa on land assigned to their use, immigrant claim to land property would be reinforced. This, of course, would make recovery of the land difficult unless the original holders were prepared to pay the value of the plantations<sup>254</sup>. The Bakweri Land Claim Committee and the Bakossi Land Syndicate were organized to protect native land rights in the Victoria and Kumba Divisions<sup>255</sup>. The natives were protecting their land rights against land expropriation by both the colonial plantation owners and settlers from the Bamileke districts.

After the Second World War and following the creation of the CDC in 1946 and the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road in 1947, there was an influx of Nigerian or Igbo immigrants to the Southern Cameroons. The Nigerians came as plantations labourers and this surplus labour made labour cheap in the plantations. As a result, most French Cameroonians decided to quit the plantations. Rather than sell their labour cheaply to the CDC, they started their own farms and plantations, which became prosperous and lucrative.

Due to the fertility of the volcanic soils, these immigrants, mostly from the Bamileke grassland did not nurture an imminent desire to return to their areas of origin, thereby increasing the

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<sup>253</sup> E, Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism", p.240.

<sup>254</sup> These fears resulted in the Bakossi –Bamileke Tombel War of 1966-1967

<sup>255</sup> Created in the 1940s the Bakweri land claim committee did not go beyond agitations and petitions but the Bakossi land syndicate which existed since the early 1930s moved from petitions to anti –settlers violence in 1966-1967

pressure on non-plantation lands. Coming from areas of relatively poor soils, non-indigenes were generally hardworking, a quality that brought more wealth to them, sometimes to the chagrin of some indigenes who felt threatened by the formers superior economic power. Consequently land disputes with native landlords intensified. In a memorandum to the Divisional Officer for Kumba in May 1953, the president of the FCWU wrote:

...Our compatriots in the British Cameroons were casting covetous eyes on the excellent results achieved by French Camerounians from their farming operations and that they were making strenuous efforts to reap the fruits of these men's labour. There are numerous instances where certain envious and improvident individuals sought and are still seeking to bring about, by subtle means, the eviction of industrious persons of French Cameroun origin who have developed excellent farms in their areas<sup>256</sup>.

According to Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, farmers of French Cameroon origin were subjected to a merciless and unrelenting fleecing by the landlords of Kumba and surrounding villages aided and abetted not only by the Chiefs and people but also by some of his own avaricious kith and kin (French Cameroonians) who were out to get rich quick at the expense of their more law-abiding and honest brethren<sup>257</sup>. French Cameroonians victims of these land cases in the Kumba Native Court paid heavy penalties and sometimes the court indulged in wanton and callous destruction of their farms and crops on the least pretext and on payment of a consideration by the person who covets his neighbours farm.

An examination of four land cases with the Kumba Native Court concerning French Cameroonians would buttress the view that land disputes were a problem. Aloys Nyamsi and Johannes Ngassa all French Cameroonians bought land from Martin Epie Etow (a Bafaw)

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<sup>256</sup> NAB, file S1 (1953) 3, FCWU, p.1.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

and on November 7, 1953, Aloys Nyamsi received two writs of summons issued at the instance of Johnannes Ngassa of three corners Kumba wherein the plaintiff claimed 50 pounds for trespass, and demarcation of boundary<sup>258</sup>. When the court authorities visited the disputed land, they destroyed 8 orange trees, 80 palm trees, 100 cocoa trees, 40 raffia palm trees, 11 coffee trees, 20 plantain stems, 40 banana stems, 100, 100 mangoes trees, 9 pine apples, 12 rubber trees and 2 plum trees which the Kumba police valued at 1.592 pounds<sup>259</sup>. This land dispute was already arbitrated upon by the FCWU on June 20, 1953 and decided in Aloys Nyamsi's favour and there were indication that Ngassa corrupted the Kumba Native Court that destroyed Nyamsi's crops and economic trees.

Johannes Mbianda a French Cameroon immigrant of stranger's settlement, Kumba obtained the lease of a farm from Zachaues Ebako of Kumba for 18 years with effect from October 16, 1950, in consideration of the payment of the sum of 350 pounds. This rent was discharged in one single payment. The agreement provided that the land should remain in Mbianda's possession without any interference by the lessor for 18 years, at the end of which period the lessor should reimburse the 350 pounds received from Mbianda and then re-enter his farm<sup>260</sup>. In November 1953, Ebako took out a civil summons in their Native Court claiming immediate restitution of the farm. The court decided in his favour. This was a typical case of attempts by Kumba landlords to reap the fruits of the labour of French Cameroonians.

Michael Leyou of Kopenda (Mukonje) obtained his land with the approval and consent of the village head and community of Mukonje. Apart from the price paid to his landlord Akama, Leyou paid the sum of 16 pounds to chief Ebanja of Mukonje. In June 1953 chief Ebanja took advantage of the death of Akama to authorize an ex-police sergeant, Boniface Fotabe to occupy part of the farm<sup>261</sup>. Michael

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid , p.4.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, p.5.

Leyou a law abiding French Cameroonian was helpless and lost his economic trees and corps.

Gabriel Kongshua of three Corners, Kumba obtained land from Andreas Ediane of Mukonje in consideration of the payment of 24 pounds on June 19 1953. His fellow French Cameroonians conspired with the Kumba authorities to deprive him of portions of the land. These men Ferdinand, Dualla, Daniel Nzefang and Joseph Fomo took out Writs of Summons each claiming part of Kongshua's Farm<sup>262</sup>. The Kumba Native Authorities ordered that the claimed portions of the farm to the extent of 200 square feet should be excised<sup>263</sup>. These land disputes were certainly more in Kumba Division because most of the settlers there were involved in cash crop and subsistence farming. These disputes were also common in the Victoria and Bamenda Divisions where French Cameroon industrious settlers acquired land for farming from the indigenous people<sup>264</sup>.

### **The Scholarship Problem**

The immigrants from the Cameroon under French administration enjoyed some privileges including educational facilities. Their offspring attended Elementary and Secondary Education in the Southern Cameroons under conditions applicable to the natives. However as Gibbons, Commissioner of the Cameroons declared at the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ad hoc Committee on Petitions at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on March 16, 1950, "The only possible differential treatment might be in the granting of scholarship, but it is not unnatural that pupil from the British territory should be given preference in that field".<sup>265</sup> Therefore one of the problems that the French Cameroonian Associations and particularly the FCWU had to solve was the exclusion of sons and daughters of French Cameroon immigrants from the CDC

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Details of these land cases investigated by the FCWU and other are document at NAB, file S1(1953)3 FCWU.

<sup>264</sup> Lucas Lioyuk, 90 years, Farmer, Isokolo –Limbe, November 11, 2008

<sup>265</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951) 10, FCWU, p.4.

scholarship scheme. One of the victims of this discriminatory policy was Joseph Simon Epale who was initially denied scholarship and only granted one later, when he convinced the authorities that he had a Southern Cameroonian background<sup>266</sup>.

The CDC was established in December 1946 as an agency for the socio-economic development of the territory. Among its many missions, the corporation was to provide for the educational welfare of the indigenous people. It was in this connection that the corporation introduced a scholarship scheme in 1949. The scheme allocated scholarship funds for the education of young Southern Cameroonians with excellent academic records. Unfortunately, the scheme excluded children of parents from French administered Cameroon.

In the various FCWU petitions in 1949 and 1951, the immigrants argued that they were equally responsible for the CDC revenue that was used to sponsor Southern Cameroonians in schools and colleges. They indicated that the ex-German plantations being exploited by the CDC were opened by their kith and kin and that but for the sweated labour of their kith and kin there would have been no plantations today for the CDC to operate<sup>267</sup>. French Cameroonians therefore requested for CDC scholarship for their offspring in these words:

We contribute a considerable part of the revenue from which the scholarship awarded to promising Cameroonian youths are financed. We submit, therefore, that it is but equitable and just that our children should be accorded equal opportunities in the matter of these scholarships with those of the local inhabitants<sup>268</sup>.

The immigrants further stated that except for the very recent advent of the Igbo and other tribes from the Eastern Province of Nigeria, almost all African enterprises such as petty trade, handicraft and motor transport in the Southern Cameroons were in the hands

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<sup>266</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants", p. 52.

<sup>267</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951) 10, FCWU, p.7.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.



of French Cameroonians. As such they merited compensation through scholarship for their pupils.

When this problem was first raised in late 1949, the Senior Resident Officer of the territory refused to see it as a problem. He reminded the immigrants that the conditions laid down for the award of the CDC scholarship was that an applicant had to be a person of British Cameroons origin. He added that those who did not fulfil the conditions were certainly not eligible for the scholarship. However he later recommended that the CDC should consider extending the scholarship to persons who could prove that they have been domiciled in the British sphere of the Cameroons for eight years or more<sup>269</sup>.

On December 28, 1951 Gibbons, the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, wrote to the FCWU indicating that after a meeting in the Governor's house on October 18, 1951 on the question of the eligibility for the CDC scholarship of persons of French Cameroon origins, the CDC accepted and revised the conditions<sup>270</sup>. In future the candidates eligible for the scholarship from funds provided by the corporation shall be: Indigenes of the British Cameroons; children of indigenes of the British Cameroons and children whose parents have been resident in the British Cameroons throughout the child's primary and secondary education and provided the candidate in question has taken his or her primary education in the British Cameroons and secondary education either in the British Cameroons or Nigeria<sup>271</sup>.

Similarly, eligibility for the award of scholarship to secondary schools from the CDC profit was also extended to all children living in the Southern Cameroons whose primary education was received there. These modifications of the CDC scholarship regulations enabled many French Cameroonians to benefit from CDC scholarship and to study in universities in Nigeria and Europe. These

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<sup>269</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p. 54.

<sup>270</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951) 10, FCWU, p. 48.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

educated elite could not distance themselves from the decolonization politics in the Southern Cameroons.

### **Employment**

Another prominent issue that preoccupied French Cameroonians and featured in the petitions of French Cameroon associations and pressure groups was the problem of employment. The immigrants knew that because the overwhelming majority of Southern Cameroonians received not more than six years of education, they could also dominate the civil service and the teaching professions of the Southern Cameroons like Nigerians. For example, in 1936, of the total of 163 clerical staff and custodians in government services, 130 were Nigerians while there were only 33 Southern Cameroonians<sup>272</sup>. In 1938 there were 35 trained teachers in the territory out of whom 23 were Nigerians, 10 were Southern Cameroonians and 2 were of French Cameroon origin<sup>273</sup>. French Cameroonians therefore believed that they did not enjoy the same employment right as Nigerians in the civil service of the Southern Cameroons. The immigrants were unable to understand why qualified sons and daughters of French Cameroon immigrants should be discriminated against in the matter of appointments in the public service of the Cameroons under British administration an appendage of the Eastern Region of Nigeria<sup>274</sup>.

Unemployment was the subject of a petition from the Victoria branch of the FCWU to the Governor and Commander in chief of Nigeria; Sir John Stuart McPherson on May 6, 1951. They complained that French Cameroonians were debarred from employment in the public service of Nigeria. Reacting to the petition, the Governor indicated that:

.... The policy of the British administering authority since it assumed the mandate of this sphere of the Cameroon had been to give preference to Cameroonians in the matter of

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<sup>272</sup> NAB, Annual Report, 1936,

<sup>273</sup> NAB, Annual Report, 1938..

<sup>274</sup> NAB, file S1(1951)10, FCWU, p.8

appointment, and as far as our knowledge goes, there had been no discrimination on the score of a Cameroons candidate's political status. The annals of the public service of Nigeria contains records of the meritorious services rendered to the administration of the Cameroons under British Trusteeship by officials of French Cameroun origin since the inception of civil administration in this territory in April 1916<sup>275</sup>.

As if to buttress the Governor's opinion the Resident Officer for the Cameroons Province cited many cases of French Cameroonians in the Nigerian public service. He even published a list of persons from French Cameroon employed under the Nigerian government<sup>276</sup>. Gibbons, the commissioner for the Southern Cameroons indicated that the charge was groundless and cited the example of Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue who served as a chief clerk of the British provincial administration. He, however, recommended that the conditions of French Cameroonian workers be reconsidered. Before granting them jobs, the applicant's length of time resident in the British Cameroons and his acquisition of the British way of life had to be considered<sup>277</sup>.

Another work related problem that confronted the French Cameroonians was the fact that many of them who went home on leave or retirement were only entitled to government transport assistance from their employment places in the Southern Cameroons to the frontiers. They were responsible for their transport from the frontier to their ethnic or home base in French Cameroon. This was a significant financial burden for workers from distant areas like Yaounde, Bafia, Babimbi, Bafoussam, Bafang, Edea and Yabassi<sup>278</sup>. Worse-still, upon the return of these workers from French Cameroon they were given no concessions regarding reducing or easing custom duties on their personal belongings<sup>279</sup>. The difficulties encountered by workers as they moved in and out of the Southern Cameroons during

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p.56.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>278</sup> J. E. Ayeka, 90years, retired Clerk, Limbe, March 12, 2009.

<sup>279</sup> Gobina, "French cameroun Immigrants," p. 55.

leave or retirement periods were the subjects of many petitions. For example, in a petition to the UN visiting mission in 1952 French Cameroonians led by B.S Ambahne complained that:

We cannot understand why a man whose parents are from Douala but who was born and educated and employed in Buea for example should not be given his leave pay right to Douala. That such officers are subjected to detailed search by the customs is an occasion to make us believe that we have lost all our rights to free movement within our own country<sup>280</sup>.

In response to these problems, the commissioner for the Southern Cameroons recommended that French Cameroonians who were employed by the Nigerian Government were to be given payment to cover transport cost to their homes in the French territory when on leave or retirement. This was intended to make them think less about calls for the reunification of the Cameroons<sup>281</sup>. This was possible because the frontier was no longer to appear as a major obstacle to the movements to and from their homes of origin.

### **The Frontier Problem**

Out of the sixty-six petitions and supplementary petitions to the UN Trusteeship Council presented by British Cameroonians in 1949, eleven were on the question of the frontier and twelve from French Cameroonians talked on the same question<sup>282</sup>. The frontier problem consisted of the high duties on goods, restrictions in the flow of currency from one sphere of the Cameroons to the other, and on cross-border movements, and the harassment of traders by customs and frontier police agents.

The intra-Cameroon Anglo-French boundary had many custom frontier posts where customs officials, the police and *gendarmes* often extorted sums of money from people or at other instances, searched

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<sup>280</sup> PAB, file NW/Bb/1952/2, UNO VisitingMission, p.460.

<sup>281</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*, p.219.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, p. 218.

them and seized their goods. For example, in 1924, Priso Tombi representing the Douala community at Tiko complained to the British administration against the customs treatment of his people and the exorbitant duties on their goods<sup>283</sup>. In 1952, the KUNC indicated to the UN Visiting Mission that the Custom Preventive Officers have resorted to the objectionable practice of raiding the houses of suspected smugglers inside towns and villages far removed from the customs frontier<sup>284</sup>.

In fact smuggling was principally a sign of protest and resistance to the obnoxious Anglo-French frontier and many French Cameroonians smugglers died in water or in “bushes” as they struggled to escape custom harassments. Goods and wealth were abandoned in forests, dumped into the rivers or completely destroyed when these smugglers were confronted by Customs Officers. Custom Officials stormed open markets in the villages in jeeps and land rovers and seized all suspected contraband goods they could find such as cigarettes, beer, textile, soap, kerosene, and matches. Items of trade from French Cameroon, which received customs approval for sale in the open markets, were stamped with the official customs stamp.

When caught the punishment given smugglers was severe. They either lost all their goods by confiscation or were forced to pay more than the required duty. In Nso in 1930, for example, 12 French Cameroon smugglers were caught and imprisoned for 14 days each in default of payment of fines of 15 shillings severally<sup>285</sup>. It was for this reason that in a petition to the 1952 UN visiting mission, the FCWU asked for free travel across the boundary without molestation of person or the seizure of god and money<sup>286</sup>.

Besides, frontier customs barriers distorted traditional trade between the border people. The Bamileke traders’ resident in the Southern Cameroons could not continue with their trade in Kola as

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<sup>283</sup> Fanzo, “Trans-Frontier Relations,” p. 334.

<sup>284</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1952/1, KUNC, 1952, p.15.

<sup>285</sup> Fanzo, “Trans-Frontier Relations”, p.334.

<sup>286</sup> Gobina, “French Cameroun Immigrants,” p. 51.

well as other forms of small trans-frontier commerce because of custom barriers. In 1949 the UN visiting mission noted this difficulty faced by Bamileke traders interested or involved in cross –border trade<sup>287</sup>.

Due to the extreme natural difficulty in the way of contact between the Southern Cameroons and Eastern Nigeria aggravated by the paucity of fishing facilities between Victoria and Calabar and Port Harcourt, French Cameroon became the most convenient route for the evacuation of produce from the British side. Frontier harassment therefore prevented immigrant traders in Victoria and Kumba from evacuating their goods by the French railway to Douala<sup>288</sup>. These traders became particularly strong advocates of reunification because of frontier obstacles to trade.

The frontier problem was not only raised by traders. Non-traders also complained because social and cultural interactions between border peoples were reduced by the frontier. In 1925 the French even instituted a *laissez- passer* regulating the movements of person in and out of French Cameroon. These formalities were so strictly implemented that when a relation died in neighbouring Bamenda Division in the Southern Cameroons, a person in Dschang needed a *laissez-passer* to go for burial<sup>289</sup>.

On the other hand, French Cameroonians resident in the Southern Cameroons wishing to travel to French Cameroon with their guns had to apply for French fire arms licence even if they were in possession of a British licence<sup>290</sup>. For example, Francis Ebunbu wrote to the Senior Resident Officer Cameroons Province, Buea in August 1941, asking the Resident Officer to write to the French authorities permitting him to carry his double-barrel shotgun to Yapoma, Douala in French Cameroon during the holidays<sup>291</sup>.

Since frontier problems made French Cameroonians traders, workers and smugglers advocates of reunification or the elimination

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<sup>287</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.90.

<sup>288</sup> NAB, file Vb/b (1951)1, KUNC, p.3.

<sup>289</sup> Mokam, "Les associations régionales," p.364.

<sup>290</sup> See, NAB, file, ob/e (1941) 3, Application for French Firearms Licence.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, .p.1.

of the arbitrary frontier, E.J. Gibbons suggested the removal of all controls and charges concerning the movement across the frontier by the Africans with or without their goods. Consequently British and French authorities informed the 1952 UN Visiting Mission of measures taken to curb the frontier problems. Some of these measures were: a reduction in the number of customs post from 34 to 11 on the British side and from 11 to 7 on the French side, free movement of local agricultural and handicraft products, small livestock on lead, up to three head of large animals (cows and horses) and manufactured articles regarded as customary gifts of a value not more than 15.000 FCFA could be imported or exported freely. Frontier dwellers could import or export up to 15 pounds sterling per person or some 20.000 francs.<sup>292</sup>

### **The Situation in French Cameroon**

The associations or pressure groups created by the immigrants from French Cameroon especially the FCWU enabled them to remain in contact with their ethnic base or homeland in French Cameroon. The Duala, Babimbi, Bakoko, Batanga, Bawa Bamum Bafia, Bangissa, Bulu, Dschang, Eton, Makia, Mbo, Yaounde and a host of other ethnic groups and clans that constituted the FCWU in the Southern Cameroons manifested their concern for the situation in French Cameroon in their petition to the UN visiting mission in November 1949. In a petition of 23 long paragraphs concerning the Cameroons under British and French administration, only three paragraphs, paragraphs 4, 11 and 21 focused on the British Cameroons. The rest of the petition or memorandum (20 Paragraph) focused on the situation in French Cameroon. This was an indication that they had not abandoned or forgotten home.

They decried the flame of colour bar fanned daily in French Cameroon. In certain towns or part of a town like Bonanjo in Douala, schools cinemas, hospitals, swimming baths and hotels were

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<sup>292</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 92.

reserved: only for Europeans<sup>293</sup>. The petitioners also condemned forced labour or *corvée*, the harassment of those who were reluctant to serve the French and the poor treatment of prisoners in prisons that were miniature concentration camps. They also condemned the system of chaining arrested persons and prisoners in long rows together, of about 15 in each row, with ropes tied round the neck of one man and the same rope tied around the neck of another man and so on<sup>294</sup>.

Besides, the immigrants were also worried over the lack or absence of democracy in French Cameroon. There were no elected assemblies and no steps taken to enlighten the people as regard the democratic form of government as obtained in France and Britain. According to the FCWU, the Government of French Cameroon was a farce. There were only two secondary schools to serve the need of so large a population. Medical facilities were adequate only in the large towns of Douala, Edea, Ebolowa and Yaounde<sup>295</sup>.

Although the listed facilities were lacking, French Cameroonians were subjected to unnecessary taxes. Heavy taxes were levied on tailors, traders, carpenters, and on a host of people with various walks of life and even on local articles like dried fish<sup>296</sup>. The petitioners observed that France was not respecting the terms of the Trusteeship Agreement especially the need to promote the development of free political institutions. In this connection, the FCWU said:

This government has never believed in granting its subjects independence but we, as the Trustees of the UNO do desire that our country should be led, taught and given every advantage by the French government towards self-government in the very near future<sup>297</sup>.

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<sup>293</sup> NAB, file SI (1949)14, Petition from FCWU Concerning the Cameroon under British and French Administration, 1949, p. 16.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, p.17.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, p.19.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid, p.21.



The situation in French Cameroon therefore bothered the immigrants in the Southern Cameroons and they believed that independence and reunification could save their homeland from domination.

### **The Question of Franchise**

The most crucial problem that occupied French Cameroonians and the British Colonial Administration was the issue of the enfranchisement of French Cameroonians resident in the Southern Cameroons. French Cameroonians in Victoria and Kumba divisions in particular were well known locally to constitute the ‘king-post’, which supported the economy of these southern divisions of the Southern Cameroons. These immigrants had, thanks to their industry and enterprise, prospered, and contributed a very large share of the revenue of the Native Authorities of these Divisions.

One of the lieutenant Governors of the Southern provinces of Nigeria had in a public meeting in Victoria made it clear that but for the revenue contributed by the immigrants, their treasuries, would become insolvent leading inevitably to the curtailment of essential social services<sup>298</sup>.

Despite their contribution to the survival of the Native Authority Councils, the actual number of immigrant representatives in both the Native Authority Council and the Native Court of the Victoria Division was not only negligible but was not at all commensurate with the total immigrant population actually resident in that Division by 1951<sup>299</sup>. With this in mind, French Cameroon immigrants reminded the British of one of the axioms of democracy “no taxation with representation”. The immigrants paid head and income tax, custom duties and other duties that the British authorities proposed. The FCWU therefore petitioned Governor Sir John Stuart Macpherson on the disenfranchisement of French Cameroonians in July 1951 in the following words:

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<sup>298</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951) 10, FCWU, p.8.

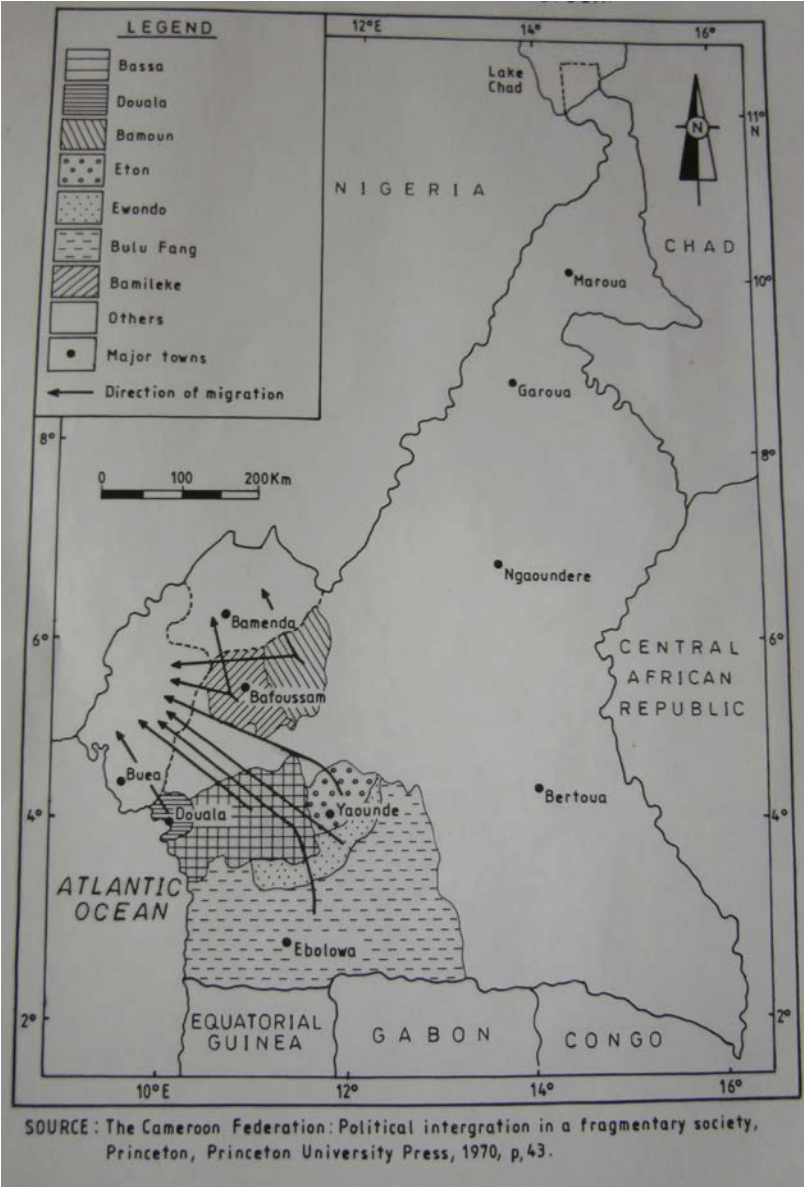
<sup>299</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

Since we are paying head and income tax, we fail to see why we should be denied representation in the management of this country affair...as a result we cannot understand why immigrants from the French Cameroun should be disfranchised<sup>300</sup>.

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

Map 6: Custom Posts between the Two Cameroons



Apart from the taxes they paid, the FCWU petition of 1951 against the disfranchisement of immigrants also indicated that the population living in the areas covered by the Victoria Federated

Native Authority and the Bakweri Clan Native Authority was worth being represented in decision- making institutions. According to the UN report of 1949, there were 4.494 indigenous people and 3.451 “settlers” in Victoria Division. The Victoria branch of the FCWU, wanted the enfranchisement of these settlers because the great majority comprised in the above figures hailed from the French Cameroon according to the FCWU<sup>301</sup>.

The immigrants also protested and resisted their exclusion from participating in the 1951 elections following the new Nigerian Constitution because the laws were violated. The FCWU quoted from the “Eastern Nigerian Guide to the New Constitution” which was published on pages six and seven of the “Daily Times“ of April 2, 1951. On the distribution of seats, the Guide started that;

In Victoria Division, the number of strangers employed on the plantation exceeds the indigenous population, it has therefore, been proposed that one of the two seats allocated for Victoria should be filled by a person who is indigenous to that division<sup>302</sup>.

The same guide indicated that all person resident in the division in which the primary electoral unit was situated for a long period of at least 12 months or who had during the period of 12 months, preceding the date for election paid tax anywhere in Nigeria or been exempted there from, had the right to vote<sup>303</sup>.

Unfortunately these guidelines were not respected in the Southern Cameroons generally and in Victoria Division in particular. The immigrants from French Cameroon were neither entitled to choose their own candidate at the primary or village elections nor were they allowed even to vote for the candidate designated by the local inhabitants. The local administrative officers did not even see it polite to inaugurate special constituencies for the sole benefit of the French Cameroonians-an important and virile minority group<sup>304</sup>. The local administrators were aware that due to their superior economic

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid, P.7.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, p.5.

and social advancement, the immigrants were ‘persona non grata’ with the local inhabitants of the Victoria Division and they could do all possible to place these settlers in the back seat of the political arena<sup>305</sup>.

**Plate 2: Joseph Henry Ngu**



**Source:** Professor B. Nasah’s collection (Picture of 1958)

**NOTE:** Joseph Henry Ngu was the author of most FCWU Petitions in the 1940’s and 1950’ and head of the Bamileke family in Kumba.

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<sup>305</sup> Lucas lioyuk, 90 years, Farmer, Isokolo- Limbe, November, 2008.

Joseph Henry Ngu presented the same political grievances especially the exclusion of immigrants from voting and from nominating candidates in the forthcoming elections in Kumba Division<sup>306</sup>. Gibbons, the Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons replied that the status of British subjects or British protected persons was a necessary qualification for voting and persons born in French Cameroon or having acquired French citizenship were automatically disqualified.

However, immigrants could vote if they had acquired the status of British subject through naturalization after five years of residence in the Southern Cameroons<sup>307</sup>.

The suggestion of the creation of a special electoral unit for French Cameroonian immigrants was considered as impractical since the immigrants were scattered; a constituency should be a geographical unit. The issue of granting French Cameroonians the right to vote remained crucial until independence as political leaders favoured and opposed the enfranchisement of this group depending on their political options

### **Representation in Native Administration**

The clamour for the integration of French Cameroonians in Native Authority administration began in 1922. In Tiko, Buea, Muyuku and Victoria, French Cameroonians requested for their participation in Local Council and Customary Courts management. They elected their own headmen but none of these ever attended a village council meeting because they were never invited. There was even an unhealthy competition between indigenous Chiefs and the stranger Chiefs or Headmen in cosmopolitan areas like Tiko and

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<sup>306</sup> Joseph Henry Ngu came from Dschang and was resident in Buea and Kumba since 1918, he worked with the prisons department. He was the principal animator of the activities of the FCWU in Kumba. He was the man behind the many petitions of the FCWU to the UN and British authorities. He also coordinated and hosted many of the pro- reunification meetings in Kumba. His son Jacob Ngu was a prominent university lecturer.

<sup>307</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951) 10, FCWU, p.28.

Victoria. This was acute between the 1920's and the 1940's. On June 12, 1939, Chief Samuel Itutu of new town petitioned to the District Head of Victoria on the loss of his authority as a result of the election of French Cameroonian Chiefs in these terms.

You as the district head are aware that I am the recognized chief of Newtown and that I am living there among the inhabitants-both natives and strangers, and must therefore be in a position to know more than any other man the good and bad among the said inhabitants. But strange to say you have singlehandedly, and in your capacity as district head appointed four strangers among the Newtown inhabitants as chief or headman of their respective tribes to whom you have also given the power to collect tax from the people without my knowledge, consent, recommendation, and co-operation. Such action must surely bring in its trial one day, both my status in the community have been greatly impaired, my prerogatives seriously curtailed, and rendered in effective, and I have been exposed to the jeers and scorn of the people over whom I am placed as chief<sup>308</sup>.

Indigenous chiefs and their subjects did not therefore want French Cameroonian Chiefs or Headmen and their participation in Local Council administration. However in the Victoria Division, the situation started improving in March 1935 when the Newtown Council in Victoria was recognized with provision for Yaounde and Bakoko members<sup>309</sup>.

By 1939, it was clear that most of the plantation workers found it difficult to return to their villages of origin and it downed on the British administration and the indigenous people that the immigrants should participate in the native administration. Moreover, the Cameroon Welfare Union (CWU) created in 1939 by G.J.Mbene with branches in Buea and Victoria and the Kamerun Union of Settlers (KUS) advocated the integration of their more progressive non-indigenous members into the Native Authority Councils even as

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<sup>308</sup> C. E. Monono, *Indigenous Minorities and the Future of Good Governance in Cameroon*, Buea, CEREDDA, 2001, p. 73.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

observers. By 1942 A. Mandoline, a Beti businessman in Victoria was co-opted into the Victoria federated council.

The immigrants in Tiko under the banner of the FCWU with Lucas Ayissi as President sent a petition dated November 1, 1949 to the UN Visiting Mission requesting settler representation in the local government of the Victoria Division in these words:

We the French Cameroons living in the British Cameroons your humble petition, beg that we too should enjoy the same advantage that of education and for the tax we pay in this land of our sojourn and also we should have representatives in the government to voice out the difficulties of the sprinkling population of French Cameroonians.<sup>310</sup>

On January 28, 1957 Roland Moumie also protested that French Cameroonians and particularly UPC militants were not allowed to take part in the February 1957 elections.

In Victoria Division, local government reforms between 1955 and 1958 introduced the elective principle to the settlers and the provision of representation for the CDC plantation areas. The debate on local government reforms touched on important principles of the local government like economic viability, male taxpayer franchise, and the protection of indigenous minorities. The proponents of the introduction of the elective principle to the settler based their arguments on the tax contribution of the settler to the Native Authority system of Victoria Division. French Cameroonian sent petitions to the administration through the FCWU, KUS, UPC, and OK etc to defend the election of settlers on an equal basis with the indigenous. For example, the KUS petition of 1957 observed that the registered list of voters in the Victoria Division showed the numerical strength of the settler as follows:

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid, p.75.



**Table 5: Native and Settler Voters in Victoria Division, 1957.**

| Council area          | Native voters | Settler voters |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Tiko council area     | 457           | 4689           |
| Victoria council area | 387           | 2210           |
| Buea council area     | 901           | 3002           |
| Balong council area   | 91            | 2543           |

**Source:** NAB, file S1 (1957)3, KUS p.I.

Given the numerical strength of the immigrants, the KUS argued that the settlers be given equal, if not more, representation in the local councils and customary courts. In a letter to the DO of Victoria dated December 17, 1957, the FCWU leaders indicated that as a result of tribalism and discrimination, the so-called strangers have been paying seventy-five percent tax in the Victoria native administration which cannot allow them to take part in their government and also deprived the strangers from enjoying the privileges or rights derived from the result of their taxation. In view of the fact that strangers paid the highest tax and also had more population in Buea, they requested that strangers be allowed to stand elections to the council and not to be nominated secretly by natives<sup>311</sup>.

On the other hand, indigenous Councillors in the Victoria Division opposed the election of French Cameroonians and other settlers into the local councils. They argued that the fact that strangers paid taxes in the division did not entitle them to contest elections because the taxes were a way of giving back what they reaped from the division through trade and employment. The taxes were also a sign of gratitude for safely staying in a foreign land with no trouble. Elected stranger representation was also rejected because of the difference of culture and right to separate development. They also argued that French Cameroonians did not come as councillors

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<sup>311</sup>Ibid, p.80.

but as traders and workers and there was no cause for their election as councillors. French Cameroonians had no stakes in Victoria and would never forget their home of origin<sup>312</sup>.

Some Victoria councillors made their stance quite clear on this issue. For example, councillors George Luma, Moni Monoko and Ndumbe Bebe argued that there were competent indigenes that could conveniently handle their matters and speak for their betterment as well as that of the indigenes of the division. Councillors Sam Eko and Ngando held that a mix between the indigenes and the strangers was not good for the people of Victoria and that there was no justification to give the latter mandate over the indigenes because of their different laws and customs. Councillor Likine added that there were certain ceremonies and traditions which a stranger cannot participate in even if he lived in the Division for fifty years<sup>313</sup>. The indigenes of Victoria were therefore resisting the integration of French Cameroonians in the indigenous administration.

On April 23, 1958 the Deputy Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons signed a series of legal notices on the local government reforms in Victoria Division. The 1958 reforms prescribed the specification of composition for the various Councils of Victoria as shown below.

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid, p.76.

<sup>313</sup> NAB, file, V (1956)3, Minutes of Victoria Divisional Council Meeting, October 1, 1956.

**Table 6: 1958 Specification of Composition for Councils in Victoria Division**

| <b>Council</b>         | <b>Natives</b> | <b>Settler</b> | <b>Appointed</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Bakolle                | 14             | 9              | 4                | 27           |
| Bakweri                | 28             | 6              | 4                | 38           |
| Tiko                   | 23             | 10             | 4                | 37           |
| Balong                 | 17             | 7              | 4                | 28           |
| Victoria area          | 23             | 6              | 4                | 33           |
| Victoria<br>divisional | 20             | 7              | 4                | 31           |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>125</b>     | <b>45</b>      | <b>24</b>        | <b>194</b>   |

**Source:** Monono, *Indigenous Minorities*, p.90

The settlers therefore had a total of 23.1% of members of the councils in Victoria Division. This reform increased the chances of French Cameroonians participating in the administration of these councils.

Another institution which attracted the attention of French Cameroonians was the Tax Assessment Committees of the division. They wanted to be represented in these committees to ensure that settlers were not over-taxed or harassed. On June 15, 1955, Pius Kandem on behalf of the Eastern Cameroon Welfare Union, petitioned the District Office for Victoria in the following words

...we have no special person who represents our interest in the tax assessment committee of this division. The person who sits there now and who has been a member of the committee for the past two years, was not put up to you by us and so does not represent our interest<sup>314</sup>.

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<sup>314</sup> NAB, file S1 (1959)5, FEWU, p.11.

The D.O was advised to nominate a French Cameroonian to represent this community in the Tax Assessment Committee before the 1955-56 tax assessment and collection begins. The problem of French Cameroonian representation in the Tax Assessment Committee was common in all the divisions of the Southern Cameroons. In fact the associations and the pressure groups created by French Cameroonians insisted that the D.Os consult them before selecting their representatives in the Divisional Tax Assessment Committees. French Cameroonians, who did not master the tax code of Nigeria, believed that they were being over taxed and that they were constantly harassed by tax collectors because they were “strangers”.

### **Other Problems**

French Cameroonians like other settlers in the Southern Cameroons faced some other minor problems as strangers; the immigrants knew nothing or little about the social and cultural norms of the natives amongst whom they settled. Some settlers therefore violated native norms and tradition especially marriage and land laws. Those who did, were tried in Native Courts and Councils and when found guilty, they were asked to pay some amount of money as fines<sup>315</sup>. Many of those who stubbornly and willingly violated native customs particularly in the Victoria Division were the Bassa and Ewondo. They took native women as their wives without respecting all the formalities for marriage. Others attempted to forcefully erect houses in native quarters without authorization, while others showed contempt for traditional elders and chiefs<sup>316</sup>.

The outcome was that many of these offenders were dragged to Native Courts and tried. Those found guilty were severely disciplined for social misconduct, cultural adulterations, and contempt for traditional elders and immoral behaviour. As a result of these severe sanctions, life became difficult for many immigrants

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<sup>315</sup> Gobina,” French Cameroun Immigrants”, p.48.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

It was not only immigrants disrespecting native laws and customs who were sanctioned. Many French Cameroonians were repatriated or expelled from the territory because they were involved in crime. They were victims of common law offences such as theft, adultery, rape, illegal possession of arms and contraband. For example, Caspar Njomo from Yaounde was deported in 1940 because he was accused of being in possession of stolen goods and, was escaping from lawful custody in which he had been sentenced for 6 months<sup>317</sup>. His witness was Raphael Atangana, a sawyer at Likomba and a French Cameroonian equally. In February 1961, 27 natives of the Republic of Cameroon (former French Cameroon) were repatriated because they were convicted of offences involving the unlawful possession of dangerous weapons<sup>318</sup>. Many others requested for repatriation because they were victims of all forms of harassments.

French Cameroonians were harassed in many other ways. In March 1957, six strangers women amongst them French Cameroonians were arrested and detained in the cell in Tiko for the mere reason that they sold food [*Kokoi*] within the market area<sup>319</sup>. It should be noted that in Victoria Division it was prohibited to sale goods or food or use any stall in a market or display goods or food for sale without the use of photographs on a permit to be taken on the payment of a certain sum of money. The same law stated that it was to become an offence punishable by law for anyone to sell or display any food or goods in an area which was not specified on his permit. Still, the law indicated that no male child below 14 years of age and no female child below 17 years of age, was to be permitted to sell or hawk any goods or food or display any goods or food within the jurisdiction of the area within the Native Authority, that any parent whose male child below 14 and female below 17 years who was found contravening this rule shall be liable to a fine of about 5 pounds. This law provided the opportunity for Native Authority

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<sup>317</sup> NAB, file TC (1940) 4, Caspar Njomo: Deportation of.

<sup>318</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1960/5, Repatriations, p. 5

<sup>319</sup> NAB, file SI (1957), KUS, p.2.

workers to ill- treat traders especially settlers from French Cameroon who could not respect the laws.

Another form of harassment came from Native Authority Sanitary Inspectors. The inspectors were too hard on the settlers. In Muyuka, the sanitary inspector found bottle in the premises of a French Cameroon settler and 9 of the persons in the compound were taken to the court and all of them had convictions, which gave a sum of 25 pounds<sup>320</sup>. It was noticed that natives who lived in a more dirty condition were not brought before the court by the sanitary inspectors. The Native Authorities also made laws directly to affect the welfare of the strangers. In the Liquor Ordinance fees paid for the sales of locally made liquor like palm wine or corn wine, which were generally undertaken by the men and women settlers, the Native Authority charged 2 pounds annually<sup>321</sup>. This was too much because these liquor dealers also paid income tax. In Buea French Cameroonians were also disgruntled in 1957 because the Bakweri Native Authority insisted on the compulsory use of pocket latrines by the inhabitants of the town who had no space behind their houses where latrines could be built<sup>322</sup>. In a petition to the British authorities, the Kamerun Union of Settlers (KUS) proposed that the authorities should make better public latrines on the water system type. French Cameroonians who had no latrines and could not show prove of pocket latrine were constantly arrested and fined

Due to these problems, the immigrants from French Cameroon therefore remained in contact with their ethnic base and organized themselves into self-help and progressive pressure groups. The most important associations were the FCWU, the Bamileke Union and the Bassa Tribal Union. These associations or groups were for the promotion of their culture and traditions. The meetings were regular and were regulated according their traditions in French Cameroon. However the associations also catered for the socio-economic advancement of its members.

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid, p.4.

As settlers or strangers, they faced many socio-economic and political problems. They were easily dislodged from land, which they acquired from the local inhabitants. This was most often the case when land surrendered to them was later discovered to be very productive. The settlers were also evicted from their farms because the natives became envious of their yields. Settlers found it difficult securing scholarship for their sons and daughters and jobs in the Nigerian civil service. This was unacceptable given the fact that they paid taxes and that they were largely responsible for the labour in the plantation sector at least before the Second World War. The police and customs officials harassed them especially when they travelled across the border, whether for trade or for social reasons. They were also not adequately represented in the Local Councils and Native Courts and were excluded from elections by the 1951 Nigerian Constitution even though they paid taxes. They were even excluded from the local councils in which their population was more than that of the indigenous people.

Through their ethnic based associations and pressure groups they asked for scholarship, citizenship, jobs, the franchise and the elimination of the artificial barriers that separated the two trust territories<sup>323</sup>. In short, they did not want to be regarded as strangers in the Southern Cameroons considering the fact that Cameroon had been one political entity before the partition of the country between the British and the French. They were also interested in the British system of administration that was more liberal than the French system. When all of the above grievances could not be redressed, and as the British continued to deny them the status of British protected persons, they initiated and worked for reunification in order to restore the pre-1916 unity of Cameroon.

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<sup>323</sup> Zang-Atangana, *les forces politique au cameroun reunifie*, paris, L'harmatan, 1989, p. 244.





## Chapter 4

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### French Cameroon Immigrants and the Reunification Idea

#### A. Origin of the Reunification Idea

Many authors have written on the reunification of the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon effectively achieved in 1961. The most outstanding of these scholars are; M. Z. Njeuma. B. Chem-Langhëë, Le Vine, Claude Welch, E. Chiabi, D. Gardinier, J. Williard, J. Richards, V.J.Ngoh, V.G.Fanso, N.F.Awasom, J.Takougang and Kofele-Kale. While most of these scholars agree that the Cameroon Reunification Movement originated in the 1940's they differ on the region of its birth and the initiators.

Claude E. Welch, Jr. dates the origin of the idea to “shortly after World War Two” and in the British Southern Cameroons<sup>324</sup>. Welch contends that the idea of reunification was included in a Cameroon National Federation (CNF) memorandum presented to the first UN Visiting Mission in 1949. He then concluded that “through contacts with the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) the wish for reunification received prominence in the French Cameroon at the same time”<sup>325</sup>. The role played by French Cameroon immigrants within the C.N.F in the birth of the reunification movement is not examined by Welch.

Victor T. Le Vine places the origin of the movement at the formation of the UPC in April 1948. According to him, the UPC program called for the reunification of the two Cameroons and they thus sought to make contacts with the inhabitant of the Southern

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<sup>324</sup> Welch, *Dream of unity*, p. 159.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, the UPC was formed in April 1948 in French Cameroon and its activities in the Southern Cameroons shall be examined in the next chapter. For a detailed study of this UPC, see. Richard Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion*, London, Clarendon Press. 1977.

Cameroons. Soon after the creation of the UPC, its leaders contacted Mr. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, a Duala living in the British Cameroons. With Dibongue at the head, the French Cameroon Welfare Association (later Union) was formed with the dual purpose of mobilizing the Duala in the British Cameroons and spreading the reunification idea. Therefore the French Cameroon Welfare Association and later other British Cameroons political groups (including the Kamerun United National Congress, of which Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was the first president) maintained active contact with the UPC's leaders<sup>326</sup>.

Bongfen Chem-Langhëë and Martin Njeuma hold that even if the UPC advocated reunification, French Cameroon could not have been a serious birth place of the Pan-Kamerun Movement because the *Bloc Démocratique Camerounaise* which embraced the most important political leaders of the territory in the 1950s opposed it. Later, when the political organizations coalesced to produce four prominent ones, [*Union Camerounaise*, including mainly the Muslim population of the north, *Démocrates Camerounaise*, comprising largely the Ewondo in the central area, *Paysans Independants*, embracing the grasslanders of the West, and *Action Nationale du Cameroun*, composed mainly of the Edea and Douala peoples of the coastal region] reunification was never given any attention. In fact as late as 1957, the most prominent politicians of French Cameroon, Andre-Marie Mbida for example, were not inclined to reunification. It was not until 1958 that the Ahmadou Ahidjo Government and the deputies of the French Cameroon assembly unanimously declared for reunification<sup>327</sup>.

In a later study, Le Vine and Roger P. Nye observed that the Cameroon Federal Union (C.F.U.) and outgrowth of the defunct Cameroon Youth League [C.Y.L.) “advocated reunification of the two Cameroon Trust Territories” thus confirming the Southern Cameroons as the place of origin<sup>328</sup>. If the C.F.U (1947-1949) advocated reunification as one of its objectives then Le Vine’s earlier

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<sup>326</sup> Le Vine, *Cameroons*, p. 147.

<sup>327</sup> Chem-Langhëë and Njeuma, “Pan-Kamerun Movement”, p. 30.

<sup>328</sup> V.T. Le Vine and Roger. P. Nye, *Historical Dictionary of Cameroon*, 1974, p. 24.

contention that the movement was born in French Cameroon would be less acceptable. Writing seven years later, Le Vine concluded that

The Southern Cameroon's unificationist strand must begin not only with Endeley but more particularly with the person of Jabea K.Dibongue (who) in 1949 organized the French Cameroun welfare association ... that same year the UPC... launched full-fledged campaign in the French Cameroun for reunification and the UPC leadership lost no time securing Dibongue's cooperation<sup>329</sup>.

Le Vine's conclusion indicates that French Cameroonians especially Dibongue were at the origin of the reunification idea in the Southern Cameroons.

Ikoyn notes that one of the objectives of the Cameroon Youth League (CYL) formed in Lagos in March 1940 was to "unify the two Cameroons"<sup>330</sup>. If this view is correct, then the movement originated in British Cameroons. Amongst the founding members of the CYL was Dr. Godfrey G. Dibue a French Cameroonian from Douala<sup>331</sup>. Dibue was working as a Labour Inspector in Lagos before becoming a medical student. However no other written work supports this view of Ikoyn that the CYL was out for reunification.

David Gardinier, commenting on the origin of the movement maintains that Endeley's Cameroon Federal Union (CFU) "went on record in favour of unification of the two Cameroons" but notes that "demands for unification first emanated from the French Cameroon's Welfare Union"<sup>332</sup>. Richard Joseph concluded that the UPC adopted the idea after the idea was already in existence in the Southern Cameroons. However in the same work; he claims that two traditional groups- the *Kumze* in the Bamileke region and the *Ngondo*

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<sup>329</sup> V.T. Le Vine, *The Cameroon Federal Republic*, Ithaca, cornel University Press, 1971, pp. 23-24.

<sup>330</sup> Cited in Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism," p. 405.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid, p.371.

<sup>332</sup> Gardinier, *Cameroons* p.59.

in the Douala area were already advocating the idea in French Cameroon<sup>333</sup>.

Welch, who seems quite sure that the movement had its birth- "shortly after World War Two" and in the "British Cameroons", seems to negate his assertion by contending that the Ewe claims for unification in Togo provided the example for Cameroonian reunification and that these claims received wide publicity through "Ewe colonies" in Douala<sup>334</sup>.

Joseph Takougang is of the opinion that the concept of reunification had its origins among French Cameroon immigrants in the Southern Cameroons but argues that it was the UPC that ultimately became the most vocal and unwavering promoter of the idea in the two Cameroons.<sup>335</sup> According to him, UPC's persistent pursuit of reunification was partly responsible for inspiring almost all of the important political leaders in the Southern Cameroons (with the exception of P.M. Kale) to embrace the concept of reunification between 1948 and 1955.

This vacillation by many authors indicates the difficulty of documenting the birthplace and initiators of the reunification idea. However there is evidence indicating that French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons ignited the flames and sowed the seeds of reunification. In other words, French Cameroon immigrants were the initiators and active promoters of the reunification idea in the 1940s and 1950s while the Southern Cameroons provided the theatre for the birth and propagation of the idea.

### **Pressure Groups and the Birth of Reunification**

To begin with, the first recorded political movement in the Southern Cameroons was the Cameroon Welfare Union (CWU) formed by G.J. Mbene a Bakweri School Master in 1939<sup>336</sup>. It started

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<sup>333</sup> Joseph, *Radical Nationalism*. p. 188.

<sup>334</sup> Welch, *Dream of unity*, pp. 37-147; 158 and 167, for Ewe nationalism Welch, however mentions that zik had sent documents to Endeley relating to the Ewe question.

<sup>335</sup> J. Takougang, "The UPC and its Southern Cameroons Connection", p.11.

<sup>336</sup> Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroon*, p. 21.

as a Bakweri Cultural Organization with membership limited to the western-educated Bakweri. When its branches were established in the main towns of the Southern Cameroons, its membership was extended to include many of the non –Bakweri western –educated Southern Cameroonians.

Through an appeal from Mbene, Paul M. Kale founded the Lagos branch of the CWU. Kale's Lagos branch prompted the mother branch in Victoria to write a petition to the British requesting representation for the Southern Cameroons in the Nigerian Central Legislative Assembly located at Lagos<sup>337</sup>. After a meeting of the representatives of all the CWU branches in Victoria on June 20, 1940, the delegates dispatched a list of three names from which the British could choose at least one to represent the region at Lagos. The names included Paul M. Kale-a schoolmaster at Lagos, Charlie Ndobide-a businessman in Kumba, and Dr Barber-a native of Fernando Po<sup>338</sup>. The CWU therefore ended its political demands by requesting for a distinctive identity for the Southern Cameroons and its inhabitants within Nigeria. Reunification with French Cameroon was never contemplated by the Southern Cameroonians, members of this pressure group.

As the CWU dwindled into oblivion, members of the Lagos branch founded the Cameroon Youth league (CYL) on March 27, 1940<sup>339</sup>. It was made up mostly of British Cameroonian students in various Nigerian institutions. The motto of the CYL was "Unity and Co-operation". They chose unity and cooperation as motto because Cameroonians were not at the time well organized and consequently were not united and could not therefore cooperate to achieve the objectives of the movement. The aim of the CYL was to redress the economic, educational, political and social grievances of British Cameroonians. Politically it aimed at arousing the national

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 35.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid, p.36.

consciousness of British Cameroonians as well as seeking a recognized status for the Southern Cameroons<sup>340</sup>.

The League was to encourage intercourse among various ethnic groups in Cameroon, preserve and uplift Cameroonian traditions and customs, promote western education especially for females and act as a link between the local people and the government. The CYL propaganda apparatus in the form of a monthly bulletin called the *Cameroons Youth League Newsletter* only focus on the problems of the students in Nigeria. Structured like the Nigerian Youth League and headed by Paul M. Kale, the CYL had a Nigerian lawyer- E. J. Alex Taylor as patron. This was an indication that reunification with French Cameroon was not on the CYL agenda. Amongst its founding members were R.E. Burnley, A. E. Gwan-Nulla, F. Mbongo, D.E. Ebanja, Tamajong, T. Ndumu; S.M.L Endeley, E. M. L. Endeley, J. N. Foncha, N.N. Mbile, P.M. Kale, Mrs. Idowu, Mrs. Musoko and G.G Gibue a French Cameroonian from Douala<sup>341</sup>.

In 1944 some members of the CYL, Paul M. Kale and Dr. Emmanuel Endeley for example, participated in the formation of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's political party for Nigeria, the National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC)<sup>342</sup>. In fact those Southern Cameroonians who joined the NCNC in 1944 and who were probably members of the Nigerian Youth Movement of which the NCNC was its offshoot party, saw unification with Nigeria as the best option<sup>343</sup>. The last 'C' in NCNC was brought in by Kale's CYL, one of NCNC affiliated organization. This was further proof that the CYL was not for reunification with French Cameroon.

Even in May 1949, the CYL which already had many branches in the Southern Cameroons drafted a memorandum on the review of the Richard constitution demanding a separate region and a separate House of Assembly for the Cameroon and not reunification<sup>344</sup>. The major political demand of the CYL was the creation of a Southern

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<sup>340</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-1985*, p.184.

<sup>341</sup> Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism", p. 371.

<sup>342</sup> Chem-langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 39.

<sup>343</sup> C.T. Kuo, *Mon temoignage*, p. 120.

<sup>344</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 51

Cameroons state. Again reunification was never contemplated by these Southern Cameroonians in Lagos.

In 1946, when the Richards constitution came into force, Endeley and his friends founded a political discussion group called the Cameroon Federal Union (CFU). This body was founded in response to the evident Igbo domination and monopoly within the NCNC and in particular Igbo influence in the Southern Cameroons at the time in terms of jobs and political status. Many Igbo and other Southern Nigerians migrated into the Southern Cameroons during the period when the Southern Cameroon was governed from the Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Their arrogance and their dominance in retail trade caused a lot of friction between the indigenous people and themselves. Besides, their level of education made it much easier for them to be employed as civil servants vis-à-vis their Cameroonian counterparts. All these produced a wave of resentment and protest against them from the Southern Cameroonians. It was in these circumstances that the CFU was formed.

The CFU was out to acquire a separate regional status for the Southern Cameroons. This regional status was seen by Dr. Emmanuel Endeley and his group as the surest way to eradicate Igbo supremacy in politics and business or simply reduce Ibo influence in the Southern Cameroons<sup>345</sup>. Again Dr Emmanuel Endeley and his friends never mentioned reunification during their discussions within the CFU<sup>346</sup>. The CFU therefore simply kept alive the objectives first suggested by the CYL- a separate regional status.

Next door in Douala, the Duala traditional organization *Ngondo* was revived in 1947 and article 3 of its constitution stated: *La faculté d'entre en coexistence est offerte à nos frères de tribus voisins séparés de nous. L'assemblée traditionnelle du peuple Douala s'emploiera à réaliser notre union*<sup>347</sup>. In line with this objective, the *Ngondo* immediately contacted the

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<sup>345</sup> Chem- Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 41.

<sup>346</sup> Gardinier's view that Endeley's CFU "favoured the reunification of the two Cameroons" is not supported by any of the authors on this subject.

<sup>347</sup> Kuo, *Mon témoignage*, p.119.

Bakweri Land Committee led by Dr. Emmanuel Endeley. It should be noted that the Bakweri in Tiko, Victoria and Buea are linguistically and geographically closer to the Duala. The *Ngondo* was therefore interested in the reunification of the ethnic groups with ancestral links with the Duala rather than the reunification of all of British Cameroons and French Cameroon.

The *Kumze*- a Bamileke tribal assembly created in 1948 by Chief Djoumessi Mathias also had as objectives, reunification and the elimination of trade barriers between French Cameroon and British Southern Cameroons<sup>348</sup>. While the *Ngondo* was thinking and working more for the reunion of the Duala and the Bakweri, the *Kumze* was also interested in eliminating the boundary between the Bamileke and the Bangwa in order to facilitate exchange between these brotherly peoples.

In 1947, a group of Duala people headed by Paul Soppo Priso formed a political party, the *Rassemblement Camerounais* (RACAM) and made reunification the cornerstone of this new party<sup>349</sup>. In so doing, they hoped to locate the battlefield for the political advancement of French Cameroon abroad, at the UN. There was a strong colonial lobby in the UN to challenge French assimilations policies and frustrate the integration of French Cameroon into the French Union. RACAM hoped that when the boundary would be dismantled, reunification and independence would follow. This would reduce British and French political domination of the territory. It was reckoned that the two powers would compete with each other for a new hegemony in a reunited Cameroon, and the Cameroonians would be able to dictate their own terms of cooperation.

In February 1948, Ndumbe Bell of Douala visited Victoria and when he returned, he addressed a meeting of chiefs in Douala on March 13, 1948. In the address, he pointed out that the people under British rule were better off than those in French Cameroon because they had more amenities and personal freedoms. He recommended

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid, p.120

<sup>349</sup> Njeuma, Reunification and Political Opportunism in the making of Cameroon's Independence, *Paideuma*, 14, 1995, p.29.



that the two Cameroons be reunited under British rule.<sup>350</sup> Ndumbe Bell therefore continued with the post First World War Douala requests for British administration over their land. He did not advocate the reunification of the entire Cameroon.

### **FCWU and CNF Pro-Reunification Platforms**

With the declarations made back home by the *Ngondo, Kumze*, RACAM and some individuals, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue decided to bring all French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons under an association, the FCWU in August 1948<sup>351</sup>. The objective was to work for reunification, which was considered the best solution to the problems of French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons. The demand for reunification officially emanated first from the FCWU. The FCWU was one of the several groups that petitioned the first UN visiting mission in late 1949 to unify the British and French territories in a very short time<sup>352</sup>.

The petition was directed almost exclusively to the condition which obtained in the French territory; it claimed that the French had done virtually nothing to improve the territory, that France practiced the colour bar there, that the people lacked public liberties and representative institutions<sup>353</sup>. The focus of the petition indicated that the petitioners were familiar with the French policies in French Cameroon and believed that reunification could serve as a vehicle to protest French policy in French Cameroon. The FCWU was therefore the first social or political group to mention reunification in its petition in both the Southern Cameroons and the French Cameroon.

When the first visit of the UN Mission to Cameroon was announced for October 31, 1949, Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, a Medical doctor of Bakweri origin who had been expelled from practice in Lagos for alleged malpractice, subsequently returned to Buea and

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<sup>350</sup> NAB, File SI (1948), Ibo Union Petitions, p.309.

<sup>351</sup> Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p 135.

<sup>352</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p 122.

<sup>353</sup> See NAB; file 4134/1/28, petition from FCWU concerning the Cameroon under British and French administration.

Victoria to launch a number of social development and quasi-political organizations. He succeeded in uniting nearly 20 tribal Unions and formed the Cameroon National Federation (CNF) in 1949. Among its objectives were to assert the separate identity of the Southern Cameroonians, to unite the Northern and Southern Cameroons under British Administration and to reunite the English and French Cameroons into a unified Cameroon.<sup>354</sup> It should be mentioned that the CNF was the first national organization which made open appeal for the wider national issue like reunification. This was because the federation included associations led by French Cameroonians and also because of the presence of a UPC delegation at the May 1949 CNF inaugural conference.

The federation consisted mainly of the various improvement unions and or associations in the Southern Cameroons. The main groups were; CDC Workers Union, Bafaw Improvement Union, Balong Improvement Union, Balue Improvement Union, Bakundu Improvement Union, Mbonge Improvement Union, Ekombe Improvement Union, Bangwa Improvement Union, Balondo Improvement Union, Ngolo-Batanga Improvement Union, All Bakossi Improvement Union, Ejagham Improvement Union, Bamenda Improvement Union, Kom Improvement Union and Nso Improvement Union. The FCWU and the Baminyang Improvement Union (BIU) grouping people from the Bamboutous were part of the Federation<sup>355</sup>. This was modelled in the same way as the NCNC of Nnamdi Azikiwe was organized as a collection of pressure groups and associations. As such, individuals could only become members through their associations. The structure therefore indicated the Nigerian connection and aspirations of the founder.

It was the CNF as a national organisation that made the first written demand for Cameroon reunification<sup>356</sup>. All of the resolutions of the inaugural meeting of the CNF, held on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>354</sup>Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p.131.

<sup>355</sup> Mbile in his *Cameroon Political Story* outlined the improvement Unions and Association that made up CNF omitting the FCWU and the BIU.

<sup>356</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p 119.

May, 1949, were later presented to the UN visiting mission as petitions. During this meeting, Nerius Namaso Mbile tabled a motion to the effect:

That the Southern Cameroons be constituted into a separate region under a High Commissioner, who shall be responsible straight to the Trusteeship Council of the UN, through the governor of Nigeria, that the Cameroons be provided with a regional house exercising not only legislatives but executive powers<sup>357</sup>.

Nerius Namaso Mbile like the leaders of the CWU, CYL and CFU, was therefore interested in the preservation of the identity of Southern Cameroons and the autonomy of the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria. Reunification was not his preoccupation.

During the same meeting, a motion tabled by Raphael B. Nana (a French Cameroonian and the President of the Baminyam Improvement Union, representing the interest of French Cameroonians (Bamileke) in the Southern Cameroons) advocated.

(Re) unification of the Cameroons in principle with details to be worked out later, the removal of all types of frontier restrictions, the teaching of the French and English languages in all schools of the Cameroons, British or French<sup>358</sup>.

The memo of the B I U drafted at a conference in Kumba in 1949 also called for the removal of the boundary and customs regulations between the two Cameroons. French Cameroonianians were therefore those advocating reunification within the CNF. If reunification featured amongst the demands of the CNF it was on the insistence of the FCWU and BIU.

Besides, Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, the CNF leader did not himself believe in reunification. He only condoned reunification because he

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<sup>357</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 185.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid, also see: petition from the CNF concerning the Cameroons under British and under French administration, UN.Doc. T/pet. 4/16- T/pet.5/7. 9, December 1949, also see: Johnson, *Cameroons Federation*; p. 119.

wanted the votes of French Cameroonians<sup>359</sup>. The British-trained Dr. Emmanuel Endeley, who knew little about French Cameroon and who did not know a word in French was not really sincere about reunification. He was only paying lip service to it. He also advocated reunification mainly as a means of developing the Southern Cameroons. In fact, the CNF leaders used reunification largely as a threat, as a method of calling attention to the neglected conditions of the territory and to win a measure of autonomy from Nigeria. This was confirmed by Dr. Emmanuel Endeley in 1959 when he declared that the CNF had raised the issue of reunification because British Cameroons was lagging behind both Nigeria and French Cameroon. It was believed that reunification would make the Cameroons an economic unit with better prospects of standing on its own feet<sup>360</sup>. To Dr Emmanuel Endeley and his group within the CNF, reunification was seen only as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. As Emmanuel Chiabi puts it, the Anglophones who talked about reunification in the 1940s demonstrated more of a political muscle—flexing than a serious, concrete attempt to achieve reunification!<sup>361</sup>

Even the CFU which presented one of the longest petitions in 1949 failed to raise the idea of reunification. The CFU only drew attention to the economic potentials of the Southern Cameroons and made several suggestions for the development of the territory. The petition pointed out that for more than thirty years, the British trust territories of the Cameroons had suffered from much neglect because it was administered within Nigeria. The petitioners however advocated the teaching of English and French in the British and French Cameroons, the promotion of trade between the two territories and the establishment of a joint consultative assembly to discuss matters of common interest affecting citizens of both territories<sup>362</sup>. Complete reunification as advocated by Raphael Nana

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<sup>359</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p 119.

<sup>360</sup> Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p. 132.

<sup>361</sup> Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism", p. 407.

<sup>362</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 186.

was never contemplated. Since the CFU leadership was virtually the CNF leadership minus the French Cameroonians, the CFU stance was further proof that the CNF demand for reunification was largely influenced by its French Cameroonian membership.

The Southern Cameroons community that insisted on reunification was the Bangwa (Nweh) Native Authority. In a petition in 1949, the Bangwa referred to the Anglo-French partition of Cameroon and also raised the issue of reunification. The petition stated, among other things that:

If the UNO cannot unite both the so-called French and British Cameroons into one country, it should for the interest of the common people, do its utmost to rectify the present boundaries so that people of the same tribe, now divided between British and French Cameroons, begin to enjoy life under one government. In this way, we the people of Bangwa would be joint together with the Dschang people now under French rule. The present separation has caused so much hardship in our social life.<sup>363</sup>.

The Bangwa were certainly under the influence of the *Kumze* a Bamileke ethnic association created in 1948 by the Mathias Djoumessi chief of Dschang. In its constitution it was indicated that *Kumze*:

Se donnait pour objectif, non la réunification des deux Cameroun, mais l'obtention des assouplissements au régime frontalier afin de faciliter les échanges commerciaux entre ressortissants de leurs ethnies installés des deux côtés des zones française et anglaise<sup>364</sup>.

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<sup>363</sup> NAB, file Td/1950/12, Petition from Bangwa Native Authority to Members of the UN Delegation at Mamfe on 31/10/1949.

<sup>364</sup> NAY, 2AC 7797, Assemblée Traditionnelle Bamileke, Motion 1952, p.2.

The Bangwa therefore wanted reunification, more precisely Bangwa –Dschang reunification and the abolition of frontier or trade barriers between the two communities because of the campaign and influence of the Kumze, a French Cameroon ethnic association in Bangwa land at the eve of the UN Mission in 1949. At the fourth congress of *kumze* in Foreke-Dschang in 1951, the 12 delegates from the Bangwa Tribal Union (Southern Cameroons) still insisted on the elimination of the frontier between the two communities. Emphasis was not on total reunification.

However, Atem, a scholar of Bangwa origin claims that the Bangwa appeal for reunification could be traced far back to their contributions to the realization of some of the German projects. According to his findings, Bangwa labour was used for the development of roads, railways (especially the Nkongsamba-Bonaberi railway) and the Douala port which after the partition of Kamerun in 1916 fell within the French sphere<sup>365</sup>. Bangwa people therefore wanted reunification in order to have access to these projects given that they were separated from them following the defeat of the Germans and the partition of Kamerun. Despite this view, the outcome of the May 1949 CNF conference which the Bangwa Tribal Union attended revealed that the strong appeals for the total reunification of the two Cameroons came mainly from French Cameroonians.

The division within the CNF was therefore reflected in the confused demands it made to the UN Visiting Mission in November 1949. While some of its members stressed autonomy for the Southern Cameroons, other stressed reunification of the two Cameroons. Nerius Namaso Mbile and Dr Emmanuel Endeley led the first group and Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue led the group of reunificationists<sup>366</sup>. Since the petitions signed by the leaders of the CNF (Endeley and Mbile) laid more emphasis on regional autonomy

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<sup>365</sup> Atem, “Cameroon-Nigeria Relations 1884-1961: A Study in Political, Economic, and Social Interactions between two Neighbouring States”, PhD Thesis in History, University of Calabar, 1984, p.273.

<sup>366</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 48.

for the Southern Cameroons than on reunification, the UN Mission to the trust territory in 1949 concluded that reunification was not an urgent or important issue in the Cameroon<sup>367</sup>. The Visiting Mission also concluded like the British colonial authorities that the Southern Cameroons was not yet ready for reunification, that the idea was not universal in all of Cameroon, and that even in the areas where it was supposed to exist, it was not popular<sup>368</sup>. According to the report of the UN Visiting Mission of 1949;

In no case was complete separation from Nigeria demanded, even when request were made...for unification with the (French) Cameroons...they were coupled with the desire to remain within the framework of the Nigeria Constitution. The demand was invariably for a greater degree of autonomy, but on a purely regional basis<sup>369</sup>.

The opinion of the colonial authorities and the UN Visiting Mission concurrence received UN Council endorsement and resulted in the dismissal of the C.N.F and other Cameroonian petitions for reunification in 1949.

With this UN conclusion and realizing that Dr Emmanuel Endeley was reluctant to champion the course of reunification, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and the immigrants from French Cameroon decided to take over the reunification movement and give it a broader framework than that which had been offered by either the FCWU or the CNF. This was the beginning of the propagation of the idea of reunification in the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroonians were to play a major role in this propagation as they did in the birth of the idea.

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<sup>367</sup> NAB, file Vb/b (1951) 1, KUNC, p.2.

<sup>368</sup> Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism", p. 411.

<sup>369</sup> Le Vine, *Cameroons*, p.203.

## **B. French Cameroonians and the Implantation of Reunification**

The reunification idea won adherence in the Southern Cameroons because populations were split by the frontier and also because French Cameroonians were present in several principal towns. These migrants fell into two categories. The first were the German trained elites, mostly from the Douala and Yaounde regions and residing in Buea, Tiko, Victoria, and Kumba districts. The second category was composed of traders, mostly Bamileke and Bamum. They exploited a dynamic commercial traffic across the frontier, a cardinal aspect of which was the existence of relatives and support systems on both sides of the frontier. The most important figure in the first group was Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue while one important figure in the second category was Joseph Henry Ngu a successful businessman who used his wealth and influence to host meetings that promoted reunification and to keep up a stream of petitions to the UN. Both Dibongue and Ngu were active in creating the FCWU and the KUNC that propagated the reunification idea.

The task of implanting and propagating the reunification idea in the Southern Cameroons was carried out by the Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC) created in 1951 by Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and members of the FCWU and supported by some Southern Cameroonians. When Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue became the Honorary and General President of the FCWU in early 1951, he gave a sharply different direction to the reunification movement. This was favoured by the disagreement between Endeley and Dibongue over voting rights for French Cameroonians and power struggle between Dr Emmanuel Endeley and Nerius Namaso Mbile within the CNF<sup>370</sup>.

The major reason for the split within the CNF and Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue's creation of the KUNC in August 1951 was the latter's belief that Dr Emmanuel Endeley was not sincere in his advocacy of reunification between the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon. In addition Dr Emmanuel Endeley wavered in his

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<sup>370</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 122.



support for Dibongue's demand for the extension of voting rights to French Cameroonians who were residing in the Southern Cameroons<sup>371</sup>. He was also accused of not supporting the granting of full political rights to French Cameroonians, the abolition of restrictions which barred them from obtaining employment in the public service of the Southern Cameroons. He was accused of not supporting the grant of CDC scholarships to cover immigrants from French Cameroon in the Southern Cameroons<sup>372</sup>.

In a confidential report in 1951, the British High Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons, Gibbons, identified the following as grievances of immigrants from French Cameroon and also the causes of the origins of the KUNC:

- The disfranchisement of French Cameroonians resident in the Southern Cameroons
- The difficulties of evacuating products through convenient trade routes which passed through French Cameroon,
- Communist influence through the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA)* designed to embarrass the administering powers;
- Frustration caused by arbitrary boundary division and the believe in reunification<sup>373</sup>.

Following the clash between Dr Emmanuel Endeley and Dibongue or the pro-reunificationists in general, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue supported by Nerius Namaso Mbile, and under pressure from the FCWU, later the Eastern Kamerun Welfare Union, (EKWU)<sup>374</sup> decided to create another political organization the KUNC with the objective of fostering the struggle for reunification<sup>375</sup>. Nerius Namaso Mbile flirted with the idea of

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<sup>371</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 62.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> PAB, file, NW/VA/9 1951/1, Cameroon Unification Movement, p.81.

<sup>374</sup> The FCWU at a conference in Victoria on Sunday July 25, 1954 became known as the Eastern Kamerun Welfare Union.

<sup>375</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 48. Welch, Johnson, Chiabi and others accepts that the KUNC was the brainchild of Dibongue but Mbile claims that he formed the KUNC and only invited Dibongue and other French

reunification probably because of his electioneering plans. He was eager to secure a dominating political position in the Southern Cameroons at the expense of Dr Emmanuel Endeley, under whose presidency he had occupied the post of secretary, both in the CDC workers Union and the CNF<sup>376</sup>.

The meeting to create the KUNC was organized in Kumba between August 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 1951 by Joseph Henry Ngu, the Kumba FCWU leader who invited two UPC leaders, Ernest Ouandie and Abel Kingue<sup>377</sup>. During the meetings Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and Joseph Henry Ngu, all French Cameroonians, were elected president and treasurer respectively. Nerus Namaso Mbile who was elected secretary general and other Southern Cameroonians were brought in in order to give KUNC a true “halo” of reunification<sup>378</sup>. French Cameroonians were therefore at the forefront of the KUNC-the first political movement which saw reunification as an immediate goal.

The birth of the KUNC was more significant than that of the CNF because of the use of the German spelling ‘Kamerun’. It should be noted that the letter ‘K’ had first been used by French Cameroonians in the FCWU petition to the Trusteeship Council Visiting Mission in 1949<sup>379</sup>. Later in 1954, the FCWU became the EKWU, an indication that French Cameroonians really wanted the Cameroons under French and British administration to be brought together as in the days of German Cameroon. According to Welch, by using the word ‘Kamerun’ in 1949, 1951 and 1954, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and his political partner “gave an orthographic fillip

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Cameroonians to join. See Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p.257. Mbile’s opinion is less acceptable given that he became only secretary general of the KUNC a post he already occupied in the CNF. Secondly, the Endeley-Mbile rift derived from Endeley refusal to support Mbile as his successor to the post of president of the CDC worker union was a power struggle between the two and if Mbile had founded the KUNC he would have insisted to be its president to rival Endeley leader of CNF.

<sup>376</sup> NAB, file vb/b (1951) 1, KUNC, p.5.

<sup>377</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 123.

<sup>378</sup> Chiabi, “Background to Nationalism”, p. 376.

<sup>379</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 188

to their political predilections” which carried a strong sense of reunification of the two Cameroons<sup>380</sup>. It is therefore remarkable that this aspect of Southern Cameroons nationalism was the brainchild of French Cameroonians. In subsequent years, and until 1960, all political parties adopted the German spelling.

Another significance of the birth of the KUNC was that it was an organization of the ordinary citizens of Cameroon and all nationals of Cameroon were eligible for membership. It had to cater for the wellbeing and happiness of all nationals of Cameroon, their tribal or racial affinities notwithstanding. It was not an amalgamation of ethnic associations and pressure groups as was the case with the CNF. Unlike the CNF, the KUNC was a virile and vociferous national organization.

The French Cameroonian origin of the KUNC or the reunification movement could also be seen from its goals and following. The KUNC adopted a clearer and more forthright pro-reunification policy. The objectives of the KUNC were therefore clearly reunificationist. The three most often cited were;

- The reunification of the British Cameroons and French Cameroon;

- The teaching of the French language in the English sector and English in the French sector;

- The abolition of frontier controls between the Anglophone and francophone regions<sup>381</sup>.

Other objectives included; the creation of a Cameroon House of Assembly with full legislative and executive powers, the granting of the territory regional status, the creation of a corresponding House for the section under French administration with similar powers and autonomous regional status, the full safeguard of UN guaranteed rights of speech, assembly, press and petition. As was officially stated or outlined in its constitution, the motto of the KUNC was “towards self-government or independence for a united Kamerun”, its objectives and aims were:

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<sup>380</sup> Welch, *Dream of Unity*, p. 47.

<sup>381</sup> PAB, file NW/VA/9 1951/1, Cameroon Unification Movement, p.3.

To see to the revision, amendment and amplification of the Trusteeship Agreement; the setting of a target date on which self-government and unification would be attained; the provision of a status of citizenship of the Kamerun Territory for the indigenous population of both sections of the territory to ensure them diplomatic and consular protection; the safeguarding of the rights reserved for the people in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.<sup>382</sup>

These were the issues that featured prominently in the petitions written by French Cameroonians. Reunification or the establishment of a 'Greater Cameroon' was to guarantee for French Cameroonians the status of citizens of Cameroon and solve the problem of disfranchisement and unwanted border controls. With these lofty ideals, especially reunification and the breaking of customs barriers with the view to facilitating trade and movement between the two sections of the Cameroons under the British and French administration, the KUNC therefore attracted a large following of petty traders from French Cameroon who were in the British section and who traded in almost 75% of smuggled goods from the French Cameroon<sup>383</sup>.

Besides the above objectives that directly focused on the problems of French Cameroonians resident in the Southern Cameroons, the KUNC had more nationalist objectives than the CNF. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and the delegates from French Cameroon who attended the original meeting of the KUNC, opted for the creation of a Cameroons House of Assembly with full legislative and executive powers and the granting of the territory regional status as well as a corresponding House for the section under French administration with similar powers and autonomous regional status.

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<sup>382</sup>Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroon*, p.56.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, p.57

The KUNC also wanted the full safeguard of indigenous UN guaranteed rights of speech, assembly, press and petition. This meant the freedom to travel for business, for holiday or pleasure trips, for recreation or sight-seeing from one end to the other end of Cameroon, the freedom to hold meetings and assemblies anywhere within Cameroon for political and other purposes<sup>384</sup>. The participants at the Kumba meeting also wanted a review of the trusteeship agreements towards ensuring that the Administering Authorities do not treat Cameroon as though it were an exclusive possession of theirs.

They also called for the following; representation of Cameroon indigenes in the Trusteeship Council to present oral questions or answer on behalf of the people; the setting up by the Administering Authorities with the active participation of the people and with the approval of the United Nations of a joint programme of self-government for United Cameroon within a specified period and the creation of a platform for the discussion and tackling of national issues affecting the entire, or part of the Fatherland.<sup>385</sup> The congress wanted the total abolition of the Anglo-French frontier laws and exchange control and the creation of a customs union between the two sections of the trust territory of Cameroon as a preliminary step towards reunification.

Finally the KUNC advocated the immediate reunification of the two sections of the Cameroon Nation, with a united platform for the tackling of political, social, economic, educational and any other problems which may confront the indigenous inhabitants of Cameroon<sup>386</sup>. These objectives made Dibongue's KUNC more ambitious and reunificationist in outlook than Dr Endeley's CNF.

French Cameroonians also dominated the KUNC branches in the Southern Cameroons and Nigeria. This was the case with the Santa, Bamenda, Victoria, Tiko, Kumba, Ibadan, Enugu and Lagos branches. For example, the chairman of the Ibadan branch was the

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<sup>384</sup> NAB, file vb/b (1951)1, KUNC, p.30.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid, p.31.

vocal J. B. Bell of Douala origin<sup>387</sup>. In March 1953, his branch passed a vote of no confidence on the Governor of Nigeria Sir John Stuart McPherson following the crisis in Eastern Nigeria. Another resolution of the Ibadan KUNC branch called on J. C. Kangsen to table a motion praying the Nigerian Government to extend its scholarship scheme and appointments to the civil service of Nigeria to all French Cameroonians resident in Nigeria with the requisite qualification<sup>388</sup>. French Cameroonians were therefore very politically active under the KUNC.

By 1951, therefore, there were two political movements or parties in the Southern Cameroons: the CNF dominated by Southern Cameroonians and the KUNC dominated by French Cameroonians<sup>389</sup>. This was the situation at the eve of the KUNC Pan-Cameroon congress in Kumba in December 1951

### **The 1951 Pan-Cameroon Congress**

From 1951, the KUNC became firmer in its position on reunification for two reasons. First, there was the more affirmative leadership from Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and secondly there was more substantial UPC participation in the reunification movement in the Southern Cameroons. In July 1951, Abel Kingue a UPC leader addressed a letter to the FCWU notifying them of the selection of two French Cameroonians members of the UPC to pursue propaganda in the Southern Cameroons. These UPC militants were Mathew Fah and Jacob Mafo<sup>390</sup>. These militants were to spread UPC propaganda in the territory and organise UPC meetings in the villages, streets and some halls in trade centres and to do so within the frame of the law. These militants and others such as Francis Ewo Iseu, Douala Younge, Alfred Sika and Ernest Wandu of the UPC in Douala and John Tachwa, J. Ngemeta, Talong and Sam Morfor from

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<sup>387</sup> Amaazee, *Eastern Nigerian Crisis*, p.55

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 188

<sup>390</sup> NAB, file Vb/b (1951) 1, Cameroon Unification Movement, p.6.

UPC Dschang took part in the August 1951 KUNC general meetings<sup>391</sup>.

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 1951, the KUNC led by R.K. Dibongue organized another general meeting or a Pan-Cameroon congress in Kumba. The UPC delegation to this congress led by Um Reuben Nyobe consisted of 26 delegates. Other French Cameroon's political groups such as the *Kumze*, *Ngondo* and *Evolution Sociale Camerounaise* (ESOCAM) were also represented<sup>392</sup>. The *Ngondo* delegates were Kouo Issedou, Mongwan Ndemba, Essombe M'bondjo, and Douala Yondo. The Nigerian police confidential report on the meeting also indicated that there were detective policemen from French Cameroon who infiltrated the meeting. They were; Koumbo Gustave, Etela Elie and Victor Esembi from Nkongsamba, Philip Louis Magnaud and Safa Tombe from Douala and Youmbi Andreas from Dschang<sup>393</sup>.

At this come-together dominated numerically by French Cameroonians, participants came out strongly in favour of reunification as part of a program of accelerated political development leading to independence within five years. Unlike the August conference, this conference elaborated a skeletal programme for implementation of reunification by demanding a single Legislative Assembly for the whole of the Cameroon<sup>394</sup>. Serious consideration was given to the question of creating a common political organization of pro-reunification parties and spokesmen.

The attraction at the conference was the vocal and anti-French stance of Um Reuben Nyobe. Born in 1913 in Boumnyebel in the Sanaga-Maritime region, Um attended a protestant primary school in

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<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> ESOCAM categorically refused to support the wishes of the KUNC, declared itself opposed to reunification and left before the congress ended. Kumze not interested in general reunification wanted mostly to reunite the Bamileke with their Bangwa brothers in the British zone. Betote Akwa leader of the Ngondo dismissed the Secretary General of Ngondo Kouoh Issedou when he returned from the KUNC congress because he feared the KUNC reunification theme.

<sup>393</sup> NAB, file Vb/b (1951), p.3. The policemen were there to gain inside knowledge of the program and policies of the KUNC-UPC alliance.

<sup>394</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 124.

the Bassa area. He was admitted to the Teacher Training School at Sangmelima but had to leave after only one year, in 1932. He then found a minor post in the government finance office in Douala, and in 1939, was employed as clerk to the civil court in Yaounde. In 1944, when two French civil servants formed discussion groups designed to initiate Cameroon public employees to French trade unionism, Um Nyobe became an active participant. In 1947, he joined the *Confédération Generale du Travail* an influential trade union, and entered Cameroon political life. In April 1948, he and several trade union colleagues founded the UPC. He was later elected UPC Secretary General and it was in this capacity that he led the delegation to Kumba.

This charismatic Secretary General presented an anti- colonial speech on December 15, 1951 pleading for unity amongst the nationalists. He proposed a coordinating committee to be established outside all the existing organizations in favour of reunifications in these words:

Il faut constituer, en dehors des mouvements existants, l'UPC, "Kamerun United National Congress" et les groupements locaux qui ne trahissent pas le pays, un organisme de coordination auquel nous pouvons donner le nom de "COMITE DE L'UNITE CAMEROUNAISE", soit en anglais "KAMERUN UNITED NATIONAL COMITEE".

Cet organisme pourrait grouper tous les mouvements politiques et ces mouvements politiques prendraient l'engagement de ne jamais mener une politique contraire au programme sur lequel aura été créé le comité de l'Unité Camerounaise. Chaque organisation, sous réserve de la clause envisagée ci-dessus, conserverait son indépendance ou sa liberté organique dans son cadre propre. Etant donné que nous méconnaissions d'ores et déjà l'existence de toute frontière à l'intérieur du Cameroun. Il ne sera faite aucune exclusive à l'endroit d'une organisation adhérente au Comité de l'unité. Le programme sur lequel sera constitué le Comité de l'unité se propose comme suit:

-----Unification immédiate du Cameroun,

-----Fixation d'un délai à la durée des accords de tutelle,



-----Révision desdits accords sur les propositions qui seront élaborées par les populations elles-mêmes, comportant notamment la suppression de la mention “partie intégrante” qui figure aux accords de tutelle sur le Cameroun sous administration française. Il y aurait lieu également de veiller contre une éventuelle inclusion du Cameroun sous administration anglaise dans le territoire de la Nigéria...<sup>395</sup>.

French Cameroonians were therefore at the forefront of the call for a Pan-Cameroon Organization to advance the cause of reunification.

In March 1952, the Trusteeship council decided to send another Visiting Mission to investigate the claims for reunification repeatedly raised in many petitions from the two Cameroons. As a result, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and the reunificationists in the Southern Cameroons resolved to work with the UPC in preparation for the visit. On Friday August 22, 1952, another KUNC-UPC summit meeting was organized in Tiko<sup>396</sup>. Only French Cameroonians represented the KUNC at the meeting. They were; Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue General president of the KUNC, Lucas Ayissi president of the FCWU Tiko and Frederic Tante confirmed president of the KUNC for Tiko<sup>397</sup>. The UPC delegates were Um Nyobe and Abel Kingue

At Tiko these reunificationists renewed their earlier call for close cooperation between the KUNC and UPC and expressed their desire to create an executive committee for Cameroon unity as soon as possible. The signatories of the Tiko KUNC-UPC declaration agreed on the need for a general congress for Cameroon unity in the month of September 1952 possibly in French Cameroon to plan for the meeting with the UN team<sup>398</sup>. Such a congress could also discuss the

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<sup>395</sup> Um Nyobe, *Unification Immédiate*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>396</sup> NAY, 3AC 1953, Um Nyobe, *Programme Politique*, 1953, p.4.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid*, p 19.

<sup>398</sup> Note that KUNC leader never attended the UPC congress of 29 September 1952 at Eseka because the French rushed armed soldiers to Eseka and refused to grant them travel permits. This intimidated KUNC leaders

question of reunification and the termination of the UN Trusteeship<sup>399</sup>. The Tiko declaration also indicated that;

Les représentants des deux mouvements s'engagent à donner une large publicité à la venue prochaine d'une mission d'enquête du Conseil de Tutelle de l'ONU au Cameroun et à déployer tous leurs efforts pour éclairer les masses camerounaises.....sur le caractère de la future mission de l'ONU qui ne sera pas une mission de visite comme celle de 1949, mais une mission d'enquête..... sur le problème d'unification et sur le rôle qui leur incombe dans l'importante question d'unification de leur pays<sup>400</sup>.

French Cameroonians within the framework of the KUNC-UPC alliance therefore propagated the cause of reunification and used the KUNC branches in the Southern Cameroons to prepare the indigenes for the 1952 UN Visiting Mission to the Trust Territory.

One of the major resolutions of the Tiko meeting was the organisation of the second UPC congress in Eseka French Cameroons. The Eseka congress held from September 28 to 30, 1952 and ended with resolutions that reflected the report of the Executive Secretary of the UPC and the other speeches made by the delegates at the congress. The resolutions still revealed the determination of the French Cameroon UPCists to continue to influence events in the Southern Cameroons. Among other things, the congress resolved as follows on the reunification question; the congress invited all leaders and militants of the movement to be at the vanguard of the struggle for reunification. It declared that reunification was the primordial preoccupation of all Cameroonians given that reunification was an inevitable step toward independence

Since the Eseka congress held at the eve of the 1952 UN Mission to the territory, the congress invited all Cameroonians of goodwill to request the following from the UN Visiting Mission; immediate Reunification of the Cameroons, the creation of a Legislative

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<sup>399</sup> Um Nyobe, *Unification Immédiate*, p.19.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

Assembly for the reunified Cameroon elected through universal suffrage and by a unique electoral college, the creation of an Executive Council with a Cameroonian majority, the scheduling of independence within five years beginning from January 1, 1952.<sup>401</sup>

In order to safeguard the trusteeship status and identity of Cameroon, the congress also denounced all attempts to incorporate British Cameroons in the administration of Nigeria, and the belief that Cameroon was an integral part of Nigeria. These resolutions were another manifestation of the determination of the French Cameroonian UPCists to take active part in the politics of the Southern Cameroons especially the struggle against Nigerian domination and the reunification course. The struggle could better be carried out through petitions.

### **French Cameroon Immigrants Pro-Reunification Petitions**

Apart from propagating the idea of reunification within the Southern Cameroons, French Cameroon immigrants were very active in 1951 as they petitioned the McPherson's constitution and the exclusion of French Cameroonians from the 1951 elections. Joseph Henry Ngu leader of the Kumba FCWU and Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue the Honorary President of the FCWU wrote strongly worded petitions to the British authorities in 1951 protesting their exclusion from voting and nominating candidates for the 1951 elections<sup>402</sup>.

They also petitioned the local colonial authorities for refusing to grant the KUNC privileges, which the CNF enjoyed. For instance, the KUNC was usually refused access to divisional and provincial development committees, education committees and conferences of native authorities which the CNF enjoyed. The refusal was based on the ground that the KUNC comprised members from both British and French Cameroon<sup>403</sup>. The colonial administration also refused to recognize the existence of the KUNC because of its militancy on the

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<sup>401</sup> Um Nyobe, *Unification Immédiate*, p.40.

<sup>402</sup> NAB, file 4134/1/28 Petition from FCWU, p.9.

<sup>403</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.63.

reunification issue, its invitation for members of the UPC to come to the Southern Cameroons and its suggestion that branches of the KUNC be established in French Cameroon. French Cameroonians were against their treatment as “strangers” and their petitions considered reunification as the best solution to their problems.

In preparation for the 1951 election, a limited “stranger Franchise” was accepted in the Victoria Division for “strangers” who were resident in the division for at least five years, owned a house and paid taxes<sup>404</sup>. In Kumba Division, it was agreed that “strangers” who could prove they had a residence in the division were to be given the vote. French Cameroon immigrants who participated and those who could not participate in the 1951 elections were not satisfied with the results in Victoria. The defeat of chief J. Manga Williams shocked them. Between September 5 and November 27, 1951, the Bassa and Bakoko communities in Victoria, French Cameroonians from Bana and French Cameroonians in the Mungo Clan Area in Victoria Division petitioned J.O. fields, Chief Secretary to the Government<sup>405</sup>, complaining that the elections in the division were unfairly conducted, and they requested that Manga Williams be nominated to represent them despite his defeat. In fact the French Cameroonians in Victoria wanted Manga Williams rather than Endeley elected because Dr Emmanuel Endeley was lukewarm about the granting of full political rights to them and also because he abandoned the cause of reunification.

After the KUNC pan-Cameroon congress in Kumba in December 1951, the movement scheduled another meeting for Douala in May 1952. In order to avoid the harassment of KUNC delegates by the French colonial authorities, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue petitioned the UN Secretary General on February 4, 1952 requesting the Trusteeship Council to obtain from the Government of the French Republic in the Cameroon a “safe conduit” to enable a delegation of about 30 KUNC members from British Cameroon to travel to Douala for the May 1952 KUNC meeting. Robert Jabea

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid, p.64.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

Kum Dibongue ended the petition by criticizing the *laissez-passer* system in force in French Cameroon saying that it aimed at impeding intercourse between the frontier tribes thus undermining the solidarity of the indigenes of the trust territory<sup>406</sup> It should be mentioned that the French were nervous of the reunification movement and were taking active measures to suppress it. For example, they discouraged delegates for the Douala meeting by insisting that all persons visiting Douala should furnish evidence that they had accommodation there.<sup>407</sup>

The UN Visiting Mission of 1952 provided another opportunity for French Cameroon immigrants, within the framework of the KUNC, to present pro-reunification petitions. For example, the Bamenda KUNC chairman, B.S Ambahne-a French Cameroonian petitioned the UN on frontier restrictions and their attendant evils. According to him, smugglers were being killed by frontier police and employees of government were granted leave pay only to as far as to the frontiers where they were thoroughly searched by the customs police before they paid their own passage to their homes in French Cameroon<sup>408</sup>. The granting of leave pay only to as far as the frontier and the search of these employees by the customs and police guards made them believe that they had lost all their rights to free movement within their own country<sup>409</sup>. Reunification was therefore the solution to the frontier problems. He gave the impression that reunification was a spontaneous wish of all the Cameroonians because of the common problems faced on both sides. Proof of this was the fact that out of 52 petitions handed to the Visiting Mission in 1949, 42 were dealing with the question of reunification.

Similarly, the KUNC secretary General for Santa, Sam Mofor petitioned the UN calling for reunification and removal of frontier restrictions. Like B.S Ambahne in Bamenda, Sam Mofor complained that letters posted from Bamenda to a neighbour in the next village

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<sup>406</sup> PAB, file NW/V/9 1951/1, Cameroon Unification Movement, p.12.

<sup>407</sup> William Ngebius, 88years, retired farmer, Kumba, March 4, 2010.

<sup>408</sup> PAB, file NW/Bb/1952/2/, UN Visiting Mission, p. 460.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

which happened to fall within French Cameroon had to be carried hundreds of miles to Kumba where they were stored waiting for the methodical checking for exchange<sup>410</sup>. It was disturbing to him that letters from Bamenda to Dschang (68 miles) travelled via Douala and therefore reached late. The KUNC leaders concluded in their petitions to the UN team that the partitioning of the country and the imposition of restrictions at the frontiers was some moral injustice because Cameroonians were turned into a race whose nationals split from their friends and relations were taught different foreign languages and customs which estranged them from one another.

Despite these petitions, the UN Mission to the Southern Cameroons in 1952 concluded that the demand for reunification was localized in some parts of the Southern Cameroons and even there the question was neither a popular demand among the people nor a lively issue<sup>411</sup>. This conclusion could be explained by the fact that only French Cameroonians persisted and insisted on reunification in their petitions. With the introduction of the MacPherson constitution and the election of Dr Emmanuel Endeley and Nerius Namaso Mbile into the Nigerian legislature, they avoided flirting with reunification.

The KUNC did not welcome the UN conclusion and on November 11, 1952 dispatched a cablegram to the secretary General of the UN empowering Reuben Um Nyobe to petition the fourth committee of the General Assembly on behalf of the KUNC and the reunificationists in the Southern Cameroons<sup>412</sup>. Um Nyobe therefore addressed the UN in December 1952 on behalf of the Southern Cameroons. He called for the termination of UN Trusteeship and the reunification of the Cameroons. The speech and the ensuing debate, largely sympathetic as a result of the intervention of the anti-colonialist bloc, was printed in a pamphlet “what the Cameroon people want”. Thousands of copies were then circulated throughout Cameroon. The British colonial authorities did not remain indifferent to the French Cameroonians pro-reunification activities and petitions

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid, p. 468.

<sup>411</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 127.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, p 128.

in 1951 and 1952. Measures were adopted to satisfy their grievances and curb the spread of the reunification idea.

### **C. British Reactions to Petitions from French Cameroon Immigrants**

At the close of the 1940's the British colonial administration's opinion was that reunification was not an active issue in the Southern Cameroons. The UN Visiting Mission to the Southern Cameroons supported the colonial administration's observation in 1949. Two years later, that is, in 1951, the Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons wrote that the reunification movement was a source of embarrassment to the colonial administration and therefore, had to be contained. In his letter of October 8, 1951 to the chief secretary of Nigeria, Commissioner Gibbons remarked:

I would observe at the outset that this movement is in my opinion, now likely to attract international attention and it seems necessary to adopt deliberate measures, with the concurrence of his majesty's Government, to limit as far as possible the inconvenience and disturbance that may be expected to result<sup>413</sup>.

Why Gibbons and his colonial associates saw the reunification movement as a source of embarrassment to the colonial government by 1951, whereas it was declared unpopular in 1949 is an important question. Chem-Langhëë and Njeuma claim that the British could not be expected to support the movement, which aimed at the destruction of what they themselves had created and found otherwise convenient<sup>414</sup>. Indeed, Britain's and France's acceptance of the reunification of Cameroon in 1951 would have implied the abrogation of the post-World War One arrangement, and would have been considered suicidal by some if not all the colonial administrators. Therefore, to maintain British Cameroons and French

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<sup>413</sup> NAB file vb/b (1951)1, p.10.

<sup>414</sup> Chem-Langhëë and Njeuma, "Pan-Kamerun Movement"p. 29.

Cameroon (a structure which provided jobs for the British and French colonial services) and preserve the colony, though Cameroon was not legally a colony, the British administrators opposed reunification. According to Fanzo, accepting the reunification movement would have meant separating the tiny territory of British Cameroon from Nigeria, which was taken in 1916 as an “infilling” territory, intended for outright or eventual incorporation into Nigeria.<sup>415</sup>

Without completely dismissing the opinions of Chem-Langhëë and Njeuma, it appears that reunification became a threat because of the militancy of French Cameroon immigrants on the issue. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue’s creation of the KUNC and his ability to secure Nerius Namaso Mbile’s adherence indicated a serious intention to unite. The KUNC was seen as a union of Anglophone and francophone elements<sup>416</sup>. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue who was born in Douala, but, in 1951, was resident in Buea, naturally maintained connections with relatives and friends across the Mungo, where he was born, had gone to school, and worked. In mid –1951 the British authorities realized by means of a letter addressed to the FCWU (from Abel Kingue, secretary general of the regional committee of the UPC, Douala), that Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue’s FCWU had contacts with political groups in French Cameroon<sup>417</sup>. The KUNC –UPC meeting on August 11, -15, 1951 in Kumba increased British fears. British fears were founded because UPC leadership was quite experienced having had connections with a larger political group the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA). Members of the UPC were more adept and seemingly more unanimous in their demand for reunification. Above all, they were

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<sup>415</sup> V.G.Fanzo, “The Latent Struggle for Identity and Autonomy in the Southern Cameroons, 1916-1946”, in Ian Fowler and Verkijika Fanzo (eds), *Encounter, Transformation and Identity: Peoples of the Western Cameroon Borderland, 1891-2000*, Oxford, Berghan Books, 2000, p.142

<sup>416</sup> Chiabi, “Background to Nationalism”, p. 413.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid, p. 414.



outside the immediate control of the British authorities and thus difficult to silence<sup>418</sup>.

Given this background and the increasing French Cameroon immigrants militancy on the reunification issue, Gibbons in a confidential letter to the colonial authorities in Enugu and Lagos, proposed the relaxation of some regulations as a means of appeasing these “strangers” and discouraging reunification. In the first place, Gibbons proposed the relaxation of frontier control and trade barriers between the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon because almost all petitions from French Cameroonians mentioned the frontier problem. He proposed the free transfer of currency, food and the free passage of Africans and African products across the frontier<sup>419</sup>. The Frontier Preventive Service was to become the responsibility of the police rather than the Customs Department. Gibbons explained that “Unlike the Customs Department, the police in the Southern Cameroons are entirely locally recruited, many of their number being indeed of French Cameroon origin, and inevitably display a sympathetic attitude towards the public”<sup>420</sup>. The Customs Department was a specialized revenue collecting organization whose personnel were obliged to treat these problems in a doctrinaire manner, while the police was accustomed to acting, in concert with the Provincial Administration, with full regard to political and social consideration.

Apart from relaxing frontier controls, Gibbons recommended the reduction of customs post; there were twenty –four customs posts in the southern Cameroon by 1951. In April 1952, the posts were reduced to eleven. These eleven posts were; Bangolan, Mamumkumbit, Santa, Foto, Mbonge, Edib-Njoke, Mungo Beach, Ediki, Bombe, Mpandu, Tiko beach (Victoria)<sup>421</sup>. This was followed by reciprocal reduction of frontier posts in French Cameroon. The

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<sup>418</sup> The British did, however, succeed in limiting the UPC activities in the Southern Cameroon particularly in 1957.

<sup>419</sup> NAB, file V b/b (1951) KUNC, p.9.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid, p.10

<sup>421</sup> PAB, file NW /va/9 1951/1, Cameroon Unification Movement: Anglo-French Discussion, p. 80.

French colonial authorities were also asked to stop charging custom duties on the personal belonging of French Cameroonians from the Southern Cameroons on leave or retirement in French Cameroon<sup>422</sup>. The persecution of smugglers, harassment of traders and the extortion of money from workers on leave were the frontier problems and disabilities suffered by French Cameroon immigrants in the Southern Cameroons which Gibbons believed, if eradicated, could discourage reunification.

Gibbons was also convinced that French Cameroon immigrants could be appeased and reunification discouraged if their complaint of discrimination in the award of CDC scholarships was redressed. The first notice of May 22, 1950, advertising the offer of CDC scholarships stated clearly that “candidates must be natives of the Cameroons”<sup>423</sup>. French Cameroonians were therefore excluded. In January 1951 the advert of the CDC scholarship for that year stated, “Candidates must be of British Cameroons origins”<sup>424</sup>.

Though this revised wording did not disqualify a boy or girl of French Cameroon ancestry born in the Southern Cameroons, it disqualified one born in the French Cameroon though subsequently educated in the Southern Cameroons. Gibbons recommended and the CDC accepted that as from 1952, the scholarship could be awarded also to children whose parents have been resident in the Southern Cameroons throughout the child’s primary and secondary education<sup>425</sup>. Many French Cameroon immigrants like Simon Joseph Epale and A. J Ngassa benefited from these CDC scholarships and were educated in colleges and universities in Nigeria, Ghana, Europe and Asia.

Closely linked to the scholarships problem was the suggestion made in several petitions that French should be taught in Southern Cameroons schools and English in French Cameroon schools. Gibbons replied that French was already being taught in Southern

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<sup>422</sup> NAB, file V6/6(1951)1, KUNC, p.10.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> NAB, file S1(1951) 10, FCWU, p. 48.

Cameroons secondary schools and that it was impracticable to introduce the teaching of a second European language in primary schools<sup>426</sup>. It was not a major grievance and Gibbons did not see the reason to depart from the existing policy.

The High Commissioner also reacted to pro-reunification petitions indicating that persons of French Cameroon origin or ancestry were discriminated against in the matter of employment. In his confidential letter in October 1951 he indicated that there was no substance in the allegation because French Cameroonians were employed by government departments like the police. They were also employed by commercial firms and over 2.400 of them were working with the CDC<sup>427</sup>. However, Gibbons encouraged the colonial authorities to continue to improve on the recruitment of qualified French Cameroonians in the various government departments.

The major issue, which featured in petitions written by French Cameroon immigrants, was the disqualification of immigrants from voting in Nigeria or Southern Cameroons elections. This was a difficult matter but Gibbons pointed out that with the formal method of elections introduced under the new Nigerian Constitution of 1951 the status of British subjects or British protected person was a necessary qualification for voting<sup>428</sup>. Persons born in the French Cameroon or having acquired French citizenship could not be entitled to vote unless they acquired the status of British subjects or British protected persons. Gibbons therefore requested French Cameroonians who were interested to naturalize as Southern Cameroonians in order to participate in the elections or vote and be voted.

The preliminary requirement for naturalization was a period of residence of five years, and after the completion of the naturalization papers and the subsequent enquiries as to the character and previous records of the applicant<sup>429</sup>. There were no educational requirements

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<sup>426</sup> NAB, file v6/6(1951)1, KUNC p. 11.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>428</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951) 10, FCWU, p.27.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid

for citizenship. A delay of as long as two years might elapse between the application and the final granting of citizenship. Many French Cameroonians rejected the naturalization procedure. The FCWU contention was that all inhabitants of the former German territory of Kamerun should enjoy identical rights on both sides of the Anglo-French frontier<sup>430</sup>.

In August 1951 the Senior Resident, Cameroon Province Mr. D.A. F Shute organized meetings with representatives of the French Cameroon communities in Victoria and Kumba Divisions to discuss the issue of voting rights for French Cameroon immigrants. About 400 persons attended. Shute reminded them that persons of foreign nationality could not be permitted to take full part as voters in the political elections of another country. He agreed with them that the Cameroons, both British and French had been a single territory from 1884 to 1914 but pointed out to them that the creation of the Cameroons at that time had been entirely fortuitous<sup>431</sup>. Shute accepted the fact that the two Cameroon territories were under trusteeship and that this gave them a special position but if it was their view that this peculiar status entitled them to dual citizenship it would mean that all natives of the French Cameroon whether domiciled in the British sphere or not would have political rights in the British Cameroons and all natives of the British Cameroons would have similar rights in the French Cameroon. The representatives at the meeting make it clear to Shute that:

They, natives of French Cameroun domiciled in the British sphere, look forward to the time when the two territories would achieve self-government as a single unit and that they did not anticipate that the British sphere would achieve self-government integrated with Nigeria and separated from the French Cameroun<sup>432</sup>.

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<sup>430</sup> NAB, file Vb/b(1951) 1, KUNC, p.11.

<sup>431</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951)10, FCWU, p. 20.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

They also made it clear that it was not their intention that French Cameroonians living in the French Cameroon should have any participation in the political institutions being developed in the British sphere, as part of the political development of Nigeria, but only person who have been domiciled in the British sphere for a period which they fixed, tentatively, at five years. If a person fulfilled this condition, they considered that he should have full political rights in the territory without the requirements of any formality such as naturalization<sup>433</sup>. The representatives also suggested the creation of special electoral unit or constituency for French Cameroon immigrants but this was considered impracticable because the immigrants were scattered and a constituency had to be a geographical unit. The vexing issue of voting right for French Cameroonians was therefore not satisfactorily handled by Gibbons and Shute by 1951 and it later became a major issue in the Southern Cameroons politics.

Another reaction to French Cameroonians militancy on the reunification issue was Gibbons request for a compilation of information on the population and activities of these immigrants. The compilation started in September 1951 and ended with the publication of the results in January 1952.

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

**Table 7: Estimated Population of French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroon, 1951**

| <b>Division</b> | <b>French Cameroonians</b> | <b>% of Total Population</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Wum             | 64                         | 0.1                          |
| Nkambe          | 283                        | 0.5                          |
| Bamenda         | 1700                       | 1.0                          |
| Mamfe           | 1200                       | 1.6                          |
| Kumba           | 4000                       | 5.4                          |
| Victoria        | 9845                       | 19                           |
| Total           | 17.092                     | 3.5                          |

**Source:** NAB, file S1 (1951)10, FCWU, p.44

While the compilation was going on Gibbons distinguished four categories of French Cameroonians. The first group was the permanent settlers. These were people born in the French territory that had migrated for one reasons or another, to the British territory and settled there. The second group was the offspring of permanent settlers. The third category was a floating population with ties on both sides of the frontier and the Mungo River. These Bamileke, Balong, Bakossi, Mbo often crossed the frontier to visit kin. The fourth category was temporary immigrants who came to seek employment in the British sector<sup>434</sup>.

Since the floating immigrants and temporary immigrants could not easily be considered, estimates compiled by the District Officers indicated that immigrants from French Cameroon had reached significant proportion only in Kumba and Victoria Division, more especially the latter. This was confirmed by the District Officer for Kumba, Mr. Scott as he indicated that three-quarters of the immigrant population of his district consisted of traders and there was bound to be a considerable floating element among them<sup>435</sup>.

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<sup>434</sup> Chiabi, "Background to Nationalism". p 423.

<sup>435</sup> NAB, file S1 (1951)10, FCWU, p.71.

Despite these shortcomings, the statistics enabled Gibbons to understand the influence of this small but significant block of potential voters in the territory. Again the estimate could not reflect the true situation because many immigrants changed their names while others who lived with ethnically related people such as the Bamum in Ndop chiefdoms, the Bakossi in Tombel and the Duala in Tiko could not be identified easily by the District Officers. Also the figures furnished were estimates only, based on the figures of taxable males in each division.

Measures were also taken to minimize the importance of the subject at the UN. In this connection, French Cameroonian agitations for reunification were only discouraged and not suppressed. The French were also advised to do the same in their zone because active measures to suppress the struggle for reunification could drive the activists underground in West Africa and inflate its importance at the UN.<sup>436</sup> At home in the British Southern Cameroons, Commissioner Gibbons indicated that nothing should be done to restrict the activities of the members of the UPC (which he perceived as more intent on embarrassing the French Authorities than the British) who engage in discussing the reunification movement so far as they acted in the frame of the law<sup>437</sup>. Nevertheless, he recommended that full information regarding the political activities of the UPC in the British Cameroons be furnished to French authorities, and that a regular exchange of information regarding the movement of UPC members be made between the Resident and the Chiefs of Regions in both territories.

To discourage French Cameroonian agitations for reunification, the British had to associate British Cameroons more and more closely to Nigeria. This was the object of the 1951 constitutional reforms in Nigeria. The reform increased the number of Southern Cameroons representatives in the Eastern Nigerian House of

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<sup>436</sup> A secret British Colonial Office Report by T.B. Williamson of May 2, 1952 pointed out that the French obviously nervous of the reunification movement were at pains to agree that in the French zone it was entirely “artificial” and the French were “a little irked that the movement had started off in the British Cameroon”.

<sup>437</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1951/1, KUNC, p.14.

Assembly. This was in line with Gibbons' advice that politicians in the Southern Cameroons should be kept;

More occupied with the practical and immediately fruitful task of advancing the interests of their people within the existing constitutional framework than with the pursuit of an aim such as the unification of the two Cameroons, which obviously ought not to become a practical issue until a very much later stage in the development of West Africa<sup>438</sup>.

The increasing involvement of Southern Cameroonians in Nigerian politics was expected to pull them out of the reunification movement and further isolate the French Cameroon settlers who clamoured for reunification. This was somehow achieved because after the election of the 13 deputies to the Eastern Nigerian House of Assembly, very little was said about reunification until 1953 when the crisis in Eastern Nigeria revealed to them that as a minority within Nigeria, their interests could hardly be given priority.

The first economic solution the British proposed to counter the growing drive for reunification was to see how best to expand the profits made available from the CDC for the development of Southern and Northern Cameroons. In this connection a conference of Southerners and Northerners was organized in Buea the capital of the Southern Cameroon Cameroons in June 1952<sup>439</sup>. The conference also attempted to shift the minds of Southern Cameroonians from reunification by proposing the unification of Northern and Southern Cameroons. Discussions at the conference were amicable and fruitful but it turned out that the 1952 conference was the first and the last as nothing was heard again about the development of economic links between the two territories of British Cameroons.

The immigrants also used the low level of economic development in the Southern Cameroons and the economic problems of the people to drum up support for reunification. Britain was doing

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>439</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p.50.



precious little to develop the country. In fact, many Cameroonians who studied in Nigeria were made to understand that their country was considered a colonial backwater. French-speaking Cameroonians were even more brutal in driving home the point. To them, the Southern Cameroons was "... *une colonie d'une région d'une colonie*".<sup>440</sup>

To solve this problem, Gibbons proposed the execution of some urgent economic projects in order to narrow the economic gap that existed between the Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon. A road was constructed to link Nyasoso (a cocoa producing zone in the North-East of Kumba) and a French firm *Société Africaine forestière et Agricole* (S.A.F.A.) was also introduced in the area to exploit timber.<sup>441</sup> Efforts to intensify production in the British sector and to facilitate the evacuation of produce from there to the British ports were encouraged.

Regarding production, a case in point was that of the coffee crop of the Bakossi and other areas between Kumba and the frontier with French Cameroon. Gibbons estimated that these areas produced about 300 tons of coffee a year which was worth 70000 pounds and five times the size of production in the Bamenda Province. Unfortunately, about half the produce was disposed of clandestinely across the French frontier and half became waste because no facility existed in the Southern Cameroons for the mechanical processing of the coffee. Gibbons therefore submitted to the Eastern Regional Authorities a scheme to be put to the Regional Production Development Board for the establishment of a coffee processing plant in the Bakossi area.<sup>442</sup> The plant was to stop the illegal marketing of coffee through French Cameroons and reduce indigenous envy for the relatively better developed French Cameroon.

To stimulate production and economic development generally in the frontier areas of the Southern Cameroons, Gibbons also proposed the establishment of good communications between them

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<sup>440</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.94.

<sup>441</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1951/1, KUNC, p.12.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

and the food-producing plantation areas and the British Cameroons ports. Consequently, the CDC constructed a road in 1952 from Tombel to below the Mungo River Falls<sup>443</sup>. This road which the Acting Resident for the Cameroon Province (Mr. Osborn) described as being politically the most important project in the Province eased the evacuation by water down the Mungo River of produce from the fertile areas North of Kumba to the port of Tiko. Trade that was flowing across the borders to French Cameroon was redirected to the Tiko port to the political and economic advantage of the British.

Besides improving communication with the frontier areas as a response to the increasing popularity of the reunification movement, the British also hastened with the provision of good communications between the Southern Cameroons and Eastern Nigeria. The Calabar-Mamfe road was completed, the bridging of the Bansara-Ikom-Mamfe road was realized and adequate shipping facilities between Victoria, Calabar and Port Harcourt were provided<sup>444</sup>. This made the link between the two territories as easy as the link between the Southern Cameroons and the coast of French Cameroon. Before 1951, the public in the Cameroon Province complained that administrative integration with the Eastern Region had no practical benefits in the form of connections with the Eastern Region centres and were therefore wooed by French Cameroonians to accept reunification because of the inaccessibility of Eastern Nigeria and the relative accessibility of French Cameroon.

#### **D. Anti-Nigerians Activities**

The reunificationists from French Cameroon knew that there were many more Nigerians (Igbo) than French Cameroon settlers in the Southern Cameroons. These Nigerians dominated trade, politics and social activities. Even at the time John Ngu Foncha introduced the Cameroonisation policy of the civil service, Nigerians constituted over 30 percent of the CDC work force, 12 percent of the civil

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, p.13.

service, a quarter of the Federal staff, one-fourth of the workers of the ports, one-third of those with post and telegraph, one-half of those with the customs and three-fourth of the workers in the technical services.<sup>445</sup> The success of the integration campaign depended on the image these Nigerians painted of their country and the relationship between these people and the Southern Cameroonians. French Cameroon immigrants therefore did everything possible to damage the reputation of Nigeria and Igbo prestige and to entertain great fear for Igbo elements.

First, there was a campaign to discourage the sale of land to Igbo settlers in Kumba, Victoria and Tiko. Efforts were also made to seize land already acquired by these Nigerians. For example, in 1948, a Duala man Mpendio sold a piece of land to Michael Ejiesie of Igbo origins in the presence of George Bell another Duala man. After a few months, George Bell invaded the land and evicted the new tenant.<sup>446</sup> All attempts to get the Native Authority Court to redress the situation failed and many Nigerians became reluctant to acquire land.

There was also a campaign to boycott Igbo traders and fishermen. Another Duala man, Manga Mbela arrested and tortured indigenes who bought from the Igbo in Tiko in 1948. The campaign was intensified in 1951 when French Cameroon immigrants originated a false rumour that the Igbo in Misselele had killed and eaten a Cameroonian girl. The Igbo were therefore accused of cannibalism and other vices like rape, counterfeiting, adulteration of drugs and palm wine, land expropriation, profiteering and violation of local customs<sup>447</sup>. French Cameroonians helped to publicize these negative activities of the Igbo thus damaging the arguments in favour of integration with Nigeria.

Besides, there was the propagation of false rumours against the Nigerians. This often resulted in confusion between the Igbo and the Cameroonians and something ended in fighting. This was the case in

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<sup>445</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, P.93.

<sup>446</sup>NAB, file SI (1941), Ibo Tribal Union, p.31.

<sup>447</sup> For details of these vices and others, see; Amaazee, "The Igbo Factor ".

Victoria in 1948. On June 16, 1953, the president of the Igbo Tribal Union Victoria wrote to the Police complaining that one Joseph Okono from Yaounde spread false rumour that the Igbo elements in Victoria were preparing to fight the entire Hausa community in the town. According to him they had acquired cartridges to revenge the assassination of Igbo in Kano-Hausa land<sup>448</sup>. Although this rumour was later declared unfounded, it created mutual suspicion between the two communities. As the Igbo feared, this rumour also brought disaster between the Igbo and the Cameroonians and damaged the reputation of Nigeria in Cameroon.

On August 16, 1953, Grassland or more precisely Bamileke settlers in Buea held a meeting in the house of Vincent Nasah in 'stranger' quarters from 8pm to 12pm and drew a plan to attack and loot the Igbo<sup>449</sup>. This was intended to be a reprisal to the alleged attack on Dr Emmanuel Endeley by the Igbo on his way to the London Conference. In fact the alleged stoning of Dr Emmanuel Endeley by Igbo boys during his trip to London for the 1953 Lancaster House Conference and the attacks on him by the Nigerian press made the anti-Igbo tone to dominate the campaigns for elections in to the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly in 1953/1954. The victory of Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue's KNC which had campaigned on an anti-Igbo platform necessarily sent the Igbo settlers into a panic. In his opening address to the newly elected Southern Cameroon Assembly on October 26, 1954, the Commissioner of the Cameroons decided to use the occasion of his speech to reassure the Igbo of their future in the new autonomous Southern Cameroons. In that address, he said;

It also follows that we cannot afford any internal dissensions. Jealousies as between one part of the territory and another or conflicts between traditional elders and elected representatives, hostility between one tribe and another or between persons settled here and persons born here must be shunned like the

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<sup>448</sup> NAB, file SI (1941), Ibo Tribal Union, p.94.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid, p.97.

plague. In so small a country either we march together or we fail to reach our goal. In this territory especially every person having responsibility must in my opinion, be prepared all the time to accept a working compromise upon any issue in which he is interested in order that all of us may go forward together<sup>450</sup>.

Despite these reassuring words, anti-Igbo declarations continued to characterize elections campaigns in the Southern Cameroons during the struggle for autonomy and or self-rule. French Cameroonians knew that these other settlers were their rivals in both trade and politics and therefore fuelled the anti-Igbo feelings in the territory.

French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons precisely in the Kumba and Tiko areas originated the reunification idea in early 1948 and made it the objective of pressure groups like the FCWU, CNF and KUNC. They advocated reunification because they hoped it could end their status of “strangers” or “settlers” in the Southern Cameroons. Four problems featured prominently in their petitions to the British authorities and the UN. These were: the disfranchisement of French Cameroon immigrants, frontier regulations and trade barriers, the exclusion of French Cameroonians from the CDC scholarship award and the non-employment of French Cameroonians in the public services of Nigeria.

These problems pushed them to advocate reunification because it was the only solution to their “stranger” status. Gibbons, who was against the French Cameroonian inspired reunification, investigated these problems and proposed some solutions. The colonial authorities reduced frontier regulations and controls, extended CDC scholarship to French Cameroonians and proposed naturalization as a pre-condition for the granting of the franchise to French Cameroonians. The immigrants wanted full political rights in the territory without any formality such as naturalization. Therefore the

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<sup>450</sup> NAB, file SI (1941)1, Ibo Tribal Union. Address by Brigadier E.J. Gibbons Commissioner of the Cameroons, as President of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly at its Inaugural Meeting in Buea on October 26, 1954, p.4.

solution to the franchise problem did not satisfy the French Cameroonians. Consequently from 1953 they created and militated in pro-reunification political parties and continued to convince the UN, the colonial authorities and the Southern Cameroon elite on the need for the reunification of the two trust territories.

### French Cameroon Immigrants and Reunification Politics

#### A. French Cameroon Immigrants and the KNC

During the Mamfe conference that held from May 22 to 25, 1953, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue and Dr Emmanuel Endeley agreed to merge their political associations, the KUNC and the CNF respectively and this resulted in the formation of the Kamerun National Congress (KNC). This was the principal outcome of the Eastern Regional Crisis in Nigerian politics which frustrated Southern Cameroonians<sup>451</sup>. Before the creation of the KNC, only Nigerian political parties especially the NCNC existed in the Southern Cameroons. The representatives of the Southern Cameroons in the various Nigerian legislatures were therefore militants of the NCNC. This was the case with the thirteen deputies elected in 1951 following the Macpherson Constitution of that year.

The events that culminated in the creation of the KNC started in January 1953 in the Eastern House of Assembly in Nigeria. Eyo-Ita the vice president of the NCNC and the leader of the NCNC government of the Eastern Region refused to carry out radical constitutional changes and to reshuffle the cabinet of the Eastern Region at the request of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the national president of the NCNC. This resulted to a conflict between Azikiwe and Eyo-Ita. Azikiwe and other influential members of the NCNC masterminded the collapse of the Eyo-Ita government. Even when the government collapsed, the Nigerian ministers refused to leave while Solomon Tandeng Muna the only Cameroonian in the executive council accepted to leave.

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<sup>451</sup> For details on the crisis, see, V.B. Amaazee, *The Eastern Nigerian Crisis and the Destiny of the British Southern Cameroons*, Yaounde, Press Universitaires de Yaounde, 2000.

Face with this crisis, nine out of the thirteen deputies of the Eastern House of Assembly from the Southern Cameroon opted for a policy 'benevolent neutrality' in Nigerian politics. The benevolent neutrality bloc boycotted the sessions of the Eastern House of Assembly because the Assembly voted against the reinstatement of Muna as minister. This was an indication that as a minority, Southern Cameroons interest could not be protected within the Eastern Region.

The Benevolent Neutrality Bloc therefore decided to sever links with the Eastern Region. They called on all the peoples of the Cameroons to support the demand for a separate region for the territory. A message was circulated throughout the territory inviting all Native Authorities, tribal organisations, chiefs and peoples of the villages and towns to send two representatives each to a conference scheduled to hold in Mamfe from May 22 to 24th, 1953.

At the heavily attended conference, it was agreed that a petition be sent to Lord Oliver Lyttleton, the Secretary of State for Colonies. The petition demanded the creation of a separate and autonomous legislature for the British Southern Cameroon. Dibongue one of the few French Cameroonians at the conference also accepted to merge his political association with the CNF to establish the first party for the Southern Cameroons. In a joint statement signed by Dr Emmanuel Endeley, President of the KNC and Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue President of the KUNC, they said the decision was made "on our behalf and those of our members to merge our respective organisations into one body in order to pursue our national aspirations on a United Front for the future well-being of the country"<sup>452</sup>

Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, who led French Cameroonians in to this union or united front as the founder's referred to it, was born on October 25, 1896 at Akwa Town. He was the youngest son of a clan councillor A. C. Dibonge Ngambi. Dibongue attended the Imperial German Government School in Douala from April 1, 1906 to March 27, 1912. This school was the most prominent and efficient

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<sup>452</sup> Cited in Amaazee, *Eastern Nigerian Crisis*, p.86.



German educational institutions in the German protectorate of Cameroon. In 1911, he won the Governor Von Putkamer's prize for outstanding scholars and when he left school in March 1912, he was declared 'all round good scholar',<sup>453</sup> When he left school in 1912, he entered administrative service of the Imperial German Colonial Government and was attached to the person of the District Commissioner in Douala as his personal clerk. He abandoned service in September 1914 when the Germans were defeated in Douala and moved to the Southern Cameroons. On June 1, 1918 he was employed as a third class clerk in Buea. His mastery of the German and English languages and the German files in Cameroon and his commitment to work was compensated with his promotion to the rank of second class clerk in January 1920. In 1925, he was the first and the only Cameroonian German-educated to pass the then Nigerian civil service examinations<sup>454</sup>. In April 1927 he became a first class clerk.

On December 31, Dibongue applied for a passport to go on leave to Douala where he was born. The British colonial authorities replied that he did not belong to a territory under His Majesty's protection despite the fact that he had been on government service since June 1, 1918 and had resided continuously in the British Cameroons since then<sup>455</sup>. He had to pay for a *laissez-passer* issued by the French Consul at Lagos on January 12, 1935 before traveling to Douala. This same scenario repeated itself in November 1937 when Dibongue had to visit his sick mother in Douala. This was the brilliant Duala man who, frustrated by the border regulations between the two Cameroons, initiated the idea of reunification and made it a KNC objective.

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<sup>453</sup> NAB, file Oa/b [DIB] 4, J. K. Dibongue, Personal Papers, p. 40.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid, p.41.

<sup>455</sup> NAB, file Oa/b/DIB/1, Dibongue Correspondences, and p.319.

### Plate 3: Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue



**Source:** Dibongue Julie's collection (Picture of 1956)

The KNC was officially launched in June 1953 in Kumba with Dibongue as president, Endeley as the parliamentary leader, Victor E. Mukete as the secretary and Joseph Henry Ngu, another French Cameroonians as the treasurer<sup>456</sup>. French Cameroonians therefore

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<sup>456</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 19. Mbile claims that no one clearly knew who was the true president of the KNC, Endeley or Dibongue? See, *Cameroon Political Story*, p.259. Ngoh holds that

Dibongue was patron of KNC and Endeley president. See, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, p. 200. Many other authors wrongly conclude that Endeley was KNC president. This error comes from the fact that Endeley represented the KNC at many instances since he was parliamentary leader and also because Dibongue wanted to be shielded from the British colonial authorities.

held key positions (president and treasurer) in the KNC executive. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue also brought along French Cameroonians members of the FCWU and the KUNC into the KNC. In fact the KNC at origins had a significant French Cameroonian leadership, sympathizers and followers.

Dibongue's decision to collaborate with Dr Emmanuel Endeley and create a political party in 1953 after the divorce between the two and the birth of the KUNC in 1951 could be explained here. The KUNC was dissolved in May 1953, following the expulsion of Nerius Namaso Mbile because he supported a minority faction of the Southern Cameroons representatives that agreed to retain links with the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and associate with Eastern Nigeria<sup>457</sup>. Mbile's support for continuous links with the NCNC was proof that he was not a sincere reunificationist. Fortunately for Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, Dr Emmanuel Endeley desperately needed the votes of French Cameroonians for the upcoming elections and was ready to flirt with reunification. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue the brain behind the FCWU and KUNC (Reunification Movements) also became in need of somebody of immense political clout in the Southern Cameroons in order to be shielded from the British colonial authorities and Endeley was the only logical choice<sup>458</sup>. These were the considerations that worked in favour of a new alliance between Dibongue and Endeley.

Apart from these considerations, the efforts made by the British to keep Cameroonians of the two trust territories apart especially the establishment of a semi-autonomous House of Assembly in the Southern Cameroons with no representation for the "settlers" from French Cameroon made Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue to moderate his policies. The exclusion of Dibongue, for example, from representation in the newly created House made him to relax his radical stance on the reunification issue and further engaged in the dissolution of the most zealous pro-reunification party KUNC in

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<sup>457</sup> Gobina, "French Cameroun Immigrants," p.78.

<sup>458</sup> Ngho, *Southern Cameroons*, p.73.

favour of the less zealous KNC<sup>459</sup>. In fact one of those who were instrumental, behind-the-scene, in the constitutional advancement of Southern Cameroons by its being granted a “quasi-federal” status was Dibongue. He successfully used the threat of reunification with the French Cameroon to coerce British authorities into granting the Southern Cameroons a limited degree of self-government from Nigeria in 1954. His exclusion from the House was therefore painful. In a personal letter to Isaac Malafa dated February 14, 1955, Dibongue said “...I would like you to judge for yourself as to who made it possible for the Southern Cameroons to obtain its present enhanced political status. I am glad that the ‘powers-that-be’ know the person who has been ‘stirring the pot’.”<sup>460</sup>

The influence of French Cameroon immigrants and Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue in particular in the KNC could be seen from the name and objectives of the party. The KNC which was a merger of Dibongue’s KUNC and Endeley’s CNF was in fact the KUNC minus the U. Not much was taken from the CNF in naming the new party. By adopting the German spelling “Kamerun”, the KNC was borrowing from French Cameroonians who were the first to use this German spelling in their petition to the UN in 1949. The motto of the KNC was “towards self-government or independence for a United Kamerun” and its objectives and aims were to press for the early reunification of the two Cameroons and to see the revision, amendment or amplification of the Trusteeship Agreement<sup>461</sup>. The motto and objectives of the KNC were therefore closer to the motto and objectives of the KUNC than to the motto and objectives of the CNF. This was an indication that French Cameroonians led by Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue were instrumental in framing the new political marriage and that they were ready to work for reunification within the KNC.

Dibongue’s influence in the KNC could also be seen from the many secret and open lectures he organized on behalf of the KNC

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<sup>459</sup> Nzume, “British and French Administration of Peoples”, p.302.

<sup>460</sup> Malafa’s Archives Bota, Letter from Dibongue to I.M. Malafa, 1955.

<sup>461</sup> Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p. 143.

and in favour of reunification. At the beginning, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue as the initiator and head of the party, drafted the party's manifesto and wrote all petitions for the KNC. He also toured extensively all the parts of the British Cameroons in 1953 preaching that French Cameroonians and British Cameroonians are brothers and sisters and that since Nigerians want to dominate them, they must unite to check Nigerians domination<sup>462</sup>. These tours and anti-Igbo campaigns were quite instrumental in influencing the results of the 1953-1954 elections. Dibongue's KNC defeated the KPP because it campaigned on an anti-Igbo platform.

Dibongue's pro-reunification lectures and seemingly anti-Nigerian or more precisely anti-Igbo campaigns, met with violent petitions from the Nigerian settlers in the Southern Cameroons. For example, Stephen R. Igwendu a Nigerian reacted to Dibongue's 1953 lectures by calling on the colonial authorities to repatriate him to Douala describing his activities as capable of provoking clashes between Cameroonians and Igbo settlers. According to Stephen R. Igwendu, Dibongue's main objective was to overthrow the Igbo and other Nigerians in the Southern Cameroons under the cloak of Trust Territory "since they sell their articles very cheap and accept very low fares from their lorry passengers compared with those of the French Cameroonians".<sup>463</sup> He went further to inform the British authorities that Dibongue wanted French Cameroonians to dominate the Southern Cameroons by taking over the key posts in the civil service. This attitude had to be challenged because Dibongue according to Igwendu was neither a British subject nor a British protected person and had no right with regard to the existing status, to participate in the politics of the Southern Cameroons. This reaction from a Nigerian was an indication that Dibongue's reunification campaign was certainly provocative and productive.

Dibongue also promoted frequent contacts between the officials and indigenes of the two territories. There were frequent contacts between the Mbo and Mungo traditional authorities and peoples

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<sup>462</sup> NAB, file oa/b/DIB/2, Complaint against Mr. R.J. Dibongue, p.2.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid, p.4.

along the coast and between the Bamileke/Bamum and the Tikar chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassland. For example, on December 11, 1954, the *chef de Region*, Dschang, Monsieur Borne and many Dschang notables were official guests at the Agricultural Show organized in Bamenda by the KNC government.<sup>464</sup> On December 7, 1957, Mme Messmer, wife of the then French High Commissioner for Cameroon, the *Chef de Region* Dschang and many Dschang people were Dr Emmanuel Endeley's guest of honour during the official opening of the Santa Coffee Estate.<sup>465</sup> These contacts reminded the common people of the historic and cultural relations between the two Cameroons and made them more convinced that frontier regulations were unnecessary, divisive and degrading to the divided people.

Unfortunately for Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, the KNC brought together French Cameroonians and Southern Cameroonians with different political aspirations for the territory. The reunificationists led by Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, Joseph Henry Ngu and other French Cameroonians wanted the reunification of the Cameroons; the autonomists or integrationists led by Endeley wanted an autonomous region for the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria while the secessionists or separatists led by the chiefs wanted the territory to break with Nigeria and gain independence as a separate state<sup>466</sup>. The KNC as the first indigenous political party created as a result of frustration following the Eastern Nigerian Regional Crisis, therefore included strange bed-fellows in its membership. The loyalty of French Cameroonians to the KNC party depended on Endeley's ability to dilly-dally or toy with the idea of reunification.

The first event that signalled a possible discord between French Cameroonians, promoters of the reunification idea and the Southern Cameroonians within the KNC was the constitution of the KNC delegation for the London Conference of July 30 to August 22, 1953. The delegation consisted of Dr Emmanuel Endeley, Rev. J. C.

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<sup>464</sup> NAB, file cb1954/1, Bamenda Division. Annual Report, p.5.

<sup>465</sup> NAB, file cb1958/1, Annual Report Bamenda Division, p.2.

<sup>466</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 73.

Kangsen, and S. A. George<sup>467</sup>. These were elected representatives of the KNC or better still Southern Cameroons. Robert Kum Dibongue and Joseph Henry Ngu both French Cameroonian officials of the party but not elected representatives of the party, were excluded probably on grounds that they were not British protected subjects. Again, while at the conference, the delegates only demanded for regional autonomy or a separate legislature for the Southern Cameroons.<sup>468</sup> Reunification with French Cameroon was not mentioned and the delegation left London satisfied that they were promised a Southern Cameroons Legislature in case the KNC won the 1953-1954 elections. French Cameroonians were not satisfied with the rather limited demands of the delegation that attended the London Conference. They could not immediately understand why Endeley limited his demands to autonomy for the Southern Cameroons when Azikiwe chairman of the NCNC had this to say about the Southern Cameroons on April 14, 1953;

The NCNC recognizes the peculiar position of the Cameroons as a Trust Territory and supports the Cameroons people's demand for separate Regional status including a separate legislative assembly for the Cameroons with full budgetary autonomy.

The National Council also recognizes and supports the desires and aspirations of the peoples of the Cameroons for unification of the two sections of the territory under the British and the French, into a single political entity as existed before 1914.<sup>469</sup>

This was an indication that even the Nigerian political elite were conscious of the need for the reunification of the two Cameroons and it was therefore unacceptable for Endeley to neglect it during the London talks. Dibongue and his followers could not therefore relent

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<sup>467</sup> Amaazee, *Eastern Nigerian Crisis*, p.89

<sup>468</sup> Ibid, p.90

<sup>469</sup> Ibid, p.77

their efforts given that reunification was also being given considerable attention even by Nigerians.

Unfortunately after the electoral victories of the KNC in 1953-1954, Dr Emmanuel Endeley began to perceive the Southern Cameroons developing into a self-governing region within an independent Federation of Nigeria<sup>470</sup>. He began to relegate reunification to the background and even ended the neutrality of the KNC in Nigeria politics by carrying the KNC into an alliance with the Action Group (AG) a political party in Nigeria<sup>471</sup>. With this change of policy or rather confirmation of Endeley's desire for integration with Nigeria, many French Cameroonians, and reunificationists left the KNC.

In 1954, Dr Emmanuel Endeley further alienated French Cameroon immigrants in Kumba when he threatened to use a caterpillar to plough down the house of Joseph Henry Ngu, a French Cameroonian, founding treasurer of the KNC and leader of the immigrants in Kumba<sup>472</sup>. Joseph Henry Ngu came from Dschang and served the British as a warder in the prisons of Buea and Kumba. When he retired in 1948, he settled in Kumba as a businessman involved in brick production<sup>473</sup>. Ngu's residence in Kumba served as a meeting point for all French Cameroonians in the division. He was also the patron of all sub-groups organized by these immigrants in Kumba<sup>474</sup>. Joseph Henry Ngu a staunch reunificationist could not

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<sup>470</sup> Chem.-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites," p.93.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid. Endeley's pro-Nigerian stance was rather surprising to the Southern Cameroonians given the harsh criticism which the Nigerian press had reserved for him when he had supported the goals of the KUNC. Again it was strange to his many supporters because after his return from the London Conference, he came to the Southern Cameroons with a heap of stones claiming that he had been stoned in Nigeria for his stance in favour of separation from Nigeria.

<sup>472</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 194.

<sup>473</sup> Nasah retired Doctor and reunificationist, Buea, March 17, 2010.

<sup>474</sup> In an interview with Bernadette Ngu (69years), in Kumba on March 4, 2010, she confirmed the threads and her father's popularity amongst the immigrants revealing that when the father died a week before the plebiscite, the immigrants became more determined to vote for reunification. Before dieing, he instructed the wife not to relent her efforts towards the reunification struggle. His land rover remained at the disposal of the KNDP campaign team.



tolerate Dr Emmanuel Endeley who publicly deserted reunification. The conflict between Endeley and Ngu and threats to dislodge Ngu widened the gap between French Cameroonians in Kumba and Endeley.

However as French Cameroonians gradually left the KNC and deserted Dr Emmanuel Endeley, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue remained with him in the KNC because through Endeley, Dibongue was able to become a member of the Nigerian Produce Marketing Board and later Chairman of the Southern Cameroons Development Agency<sup>475</sup>. In fact, when Dibongue's term of office as board member of the Central Marketing Board expired on February 18, 1958, the Federal Minister of Commerce and Industry, Dr K.O. Mbadiwe re-appointed him for a further term of two years on April 14, 1958<sup>476</sup>. It was also through Dr Emmanuel Endeley that Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was able to marry a young Bakweri girl called Julie Matongo in 1956<sup>477</sup>. Born in 1941, Julie Matongo got married to Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue in 1965 at the age of 15 as the third wife and the union almost made him a Bakweri man<sup>478</sup>. From this year and after this marriage, he settled permanently in Buea as he abandoned plans to construct a residence in Douala. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue did not also want to sacrifice the prestigious post of President General of the KNC and the chances of becoming a member of the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly.

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<sup>475</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.74. He was the first Cameroonian to be appointed chairman of the SCDA in 1957.

<sup>476</sup> PAB, file NW/sa/d 1957/1, Southern Cameroons Monthly News Bulletin, p.65.

<sup>477</sup> V.E. Mukete, 89years, traditional ruler and politician, Kumba, December 4, 2009.

<sup>478</sup> Julie Matongo Dibongue, 69years, wife of late Dibongue, Buea, March 23, 2010.

**Plate 4 Robert K. Dibongue's Installation as Chairman of the SCDA**



**Source:** Dibongue Julie's collection

**NOTE:** Dibongue (in dark eye-glasses) was being given one of the most prestigious jobs in the Southern Cameroons in the 1950's.

Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was also strongly disillusioned with the guerrilla activities, which the UPC unleashed in French Cameroon especially after 1955. He therefore concluded that reunification would mean the abandonment of the "British system with its absence of politically motivated terrorism, violence and murder - political ills which he dreaded"<sup>479</sup>. By 1955 French Cameroon settlers, reunificationists but for Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, had already deserted the KNC and were picked up by the KNDP and UPC, the new reunification movements.

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<sup>479</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 74.

The principal issue in the relationship between French Cameroonians and the KNC or Dr Emmanuel Endeley was the enfranchisement of French Cameroon immigrants. The KNC advocated their enfranchisement before January 1955 because French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons represented a considerable source of voting power which was likely to support the KNC<sup>480</sup>. Secondly, if these immigrants were given the vote, the KNC regarded it as representing a popular blow against Ibo settlers whose voting rights were resented by all but the NCNC and the KPP. Finally, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was a very influential leader of the KNC and he naturally pressed for enfranchisement<sup>481</sup>. The British authorities were initially sympathetic to the request for the enfranchisement of French Cameroon immigrants because it could placate the government party, the KNC. Secondly, their enfranchisement could take the sting out of the pressure exerted by the UPC; and thirdly it could take the steam out of the demand for reunification.<sup>482</sup>

During the KNC Annual Convention April 12-14, 1955 in Bamenda, the party issued a resolution granting the right of suffrage to persons of French Administered Cameroon origins domiciled in the Southern Cameroons. The resolution stated as follows;

CONSIDERING the fact that KAMERUN was one compact political entity under the GERMANS before the declaration of the FIRST WORLD WAR in 1914, but was subsequently divided into two distinct political spheres placed respectively under French and British administration after the Germans had been driven away by the combined British and French military forces;

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<sup>480</sup> Ibid, p.91., By 1955, there were more than 20.000 french Cameroonians of voting age in the Southern Cameroons

<sup>481</sup> Ibid, p. 92

<sup>482</sup>PRO, CO554/916, Proposal for Enfranchisement of French Cameroonians Resident in the British Cameroons, March 17, 1955. Copies with V.G.Ngoh, University of Buca.

CONSIDERING that a large number of our compatriots from the French-administered territory have been domiciled in the British-administered territory before and since the advent of the French and British to KAMERUN, and have always identified themselves with our national aspirations;

CONSIDERING also the fact that the main policy of the KAMERUN NATIONAL CONGRESS is to achieve a UNITED CAMEROONS NATION;

AND CONSIDERING that the solution of the vexed question of the disenfranchisement of persons from the French-administered territory domiciled in this territory as a result of the NIGERIA CONSTITUTION, 1951, is one of the aims and objectives of the KAMERUN NATIONAL CONGRESS;

BE IT RESOLVED by the KNC Convention sitting at BAMENDA on April 12-14, 1955, that Cameroonians originating from the French-administered territory, who have been domiciled in the British sphere of the Cameroons for five years and upwards, should be granted the right of franchise;

BE IT RESOLVED further that Cameroonians from the French section of the Cameroons possessing the above residential qualification should enjoy all rights and privileges as are enjoyed by the indigenous natives of the British section of the Cameroons<sup>483</sup>.

The convention also recommended that a motion to this effect should be tabled by Dr Emmanuel Endeley at the next session of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. That same year, that is 1955, Endeley the parliamentary leader of the KNC instead delayed a motion on the issue of enfranchisement of French Cameroon immigrants in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly.

Dr Emmanuel Endeley made a volt –face over the issue because he quarrelled with the UPC in 1955 and became afraid that if the French Cameroon immigrants were enfranchised, the UPC would be given a foothold in the Southern Cameroons. Secondly, Endeley did

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<sup>483</sup>NAB, file S1(1955)2, KNC Congress 1955, p.2

not wish to run the risk of the KNC being swamped by French Cameroonians influence, which he did not want<sup>484</sup>. Endeley probably was not anxious to neither enable Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue secure a seat in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly nor see him provided with a “private army” of French Cameroonian voters<sup>485</sup>. Endeley’s or KNC flip –flop attitude on the question of the enfranchisement of the French Cameroonians essentially dictated by political consideration, made many to abandon the party.

British attitude also changed as British officials also became reluctant to give the indigenes of French Cameroon the vote because it was felt that later political developments in Nigeria would make a decision on the ultimate political destiny of the Cameroons necessary. As the British saw it, the decision would be either association with Nigeria or reunification with French Cameroon. If the choice was for reunification, the British felt that it would be under French administration with French Cameroon rather than under British administration. In the British view, enfranchising French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons would promote reunification under France. If, on the other hand, Britain wanted the Southern Cameroons to integrate, or better still associate, with the Federation of Nigeria, it was in Britain’s best interest to oppose it<sup>486</sup>. It was also this British opinion and resistance to the enfranchisement of French Cameroonians that intensified the reunification debate.

The April 1955 KNC convention also wounded relations between the party and its French Cameroonian militants because a resolution was passed condemning the active presence of the UPC in the Southern Cameroons.<sup>487</sup> In a move that was intended to reduce the growing influence of the UPC in the Southern Cameroons, the convention also urged the Eastern Kamerun Welfare Union, formerly the FCWU to disband itself since the KNC was now fighting for what EKWU stood for. Since most of the members of the EKWU

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<sup>484</sup> PRO, CO554/916, Proposal for Enfranchisement, p.2.

<sup>485</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.92.

<sup>486</sup> PRO, CO554/916, Proposal for Enfranchisement, p.2.

<sup>487</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1951/1, KUNC, p.5.

were also supporters of the UPC cause, it could be argued that by urging the group to disband itself the KNC hoped to eliminate any organized base that the UPC could use in its operations and the quest for reunification in the Southern Cameroon. These and many other KNC policies greatly alienated French Cameroonians who then were ready to embrace any other indigenous political party that advocated reunification and bothered for their welfare.

## **B. French Cameroon Immigrants and the KPP**

As soon as the KNC was formed, P.M. Kale, an admirer of parliamentary system and of the democratic principle, saw the existence of only one political party in the region as incompatible to what he admired. This incompatibility led him to form another political party, the Kamerun People's Party on June 12, 1953. He wished to set the KPP against the KNC "in order to make parliamentary democracy a reality in the Southern Cameroons"<sup>488</sup>. Mbile and the other deputies from the Southern Cameroons who opposed Benevolent Neutrality from Nigerian politics immediately adhered to the KPP. Mbile became the KPP spokesman in parliament while Kale represented the party outside parliament.

The KPP was formed in Victoria and in a message to Cameroonians at home and abroad, the founding fathers said;

...The KPP has as its primary objective, the political organisation and mass education of all the suffering workers, the maimed and unemployed ex-servicemen, the uncared for women, the soaked-dry petty traders who cannot stand the cut-throat competition of imperialist companies and the thousands of neglected children throughout the North and South of Kamerun including our kith and kin under French Trusteeship<sup>489</sup>.

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<sup>488</sup> Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, p.58.

<sup>489</sup> Amaazee, *Eastern Nigerian Crisis*, p.87.

After this message, the KPP gradually came out with interesting objectives, “The primary objective of the KPP was regional autonomy for the Trust Territory and secession from Nigeria when the later become an independent country”. But to achieve this objective, the KPP would work “in partnership as far as possible with Nigeria and other African nationalist political parties”. It would also fight to preserve “Cameroons’ identity within the United States of West Africa”<sup>490</sup>.

The objectives of the KPP were therefore threefold and were expected to evolve in time. The immediate objective was to make the Southern Cameroons an autonomous region within Nigeria as long as Nigeria remained a colony. The next objective was to secede from an independent Nigeria and form a state of its own. Lastly such a state would be part of either the United States of West Africa or the United States of Africa whichever was possible. Reunification with French administered Cameroon highly demanded by immigrants from French Cameroon was not part of its program

With these objectives, it was difficult for the KPP to attract the sympathy of immigrants from French Cameroon. The KPP was insensitive to the difficulties encountered by these settlers (lack of franchise and exaggerated frontier regulations) and to the cry in favour of the remaking of Cameroon as it was before 1916. The party therefore failed to register French Cameroonian followers because all its leaders were agreed that reunification was out of the question.

However, some immigrants from French Cameroon who were almost permanent residents in Nigeria and who benefited from the Nigeria connection or the KPP-NCNC Alliance in one way or the other sympathised with the KPP. This was the case with R.D. Nyamsi. Mr Nyamsi had been domiciled for so long a time in Kano that he might well have been termed an expatriate Cameroonian with no active link with his Bassa ethnic base.<sup>491</sup> The franchise issue and frontier regulations were not his worries. Nyamsi remained loyal to the KPP-NCNC Alliance and to Mbile even when Mbile had

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<sup>490</sup> Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, p.58

<sup>491</sup> Amaazee, *Eastern Nigerian Crisis*, p.65.

abandoned reunification because they were appointed at Joss in December 1952 to represent the Southern Cameroons in the National Executive Committee of the NCNC.<sup>492</sup> Mbile and Nyamsi were both appointed without consultation with the Cameroon bloc and the Union of Cameroonians in Nigeria. This appointment was therefore contested pushing Nyamsi to intensify his militancy within the KPP.

Another long-time resident of Ibadan still of Bassa origins who supported the objectives of the KPP was J.B.Bell. On hearing that the Cameroon bloc had decided to be neutral in Nigerian politics, the Ibadan branch of the KUNC sent Bell, M.Taylor and T.S Ngalim (all of them Mbile's supporters) to Lagos to protest against the bloc's decision.<sup>493</sup> Bell and his colleagues held a meeting with the Cameroon community in Lagos at Lewis Street, and resolved to oppose the neutrality stand of the Cameroon bloc. When Kale and Mbile formed the KPP as a rival to the KNC of the Cameroons bloc, in 1953, Bell decided to support KPP's objective of autonomy within Nigeria. Like Nyamsi, Bell was also interested in his political and socio-economic progress in Nigeria.

Apart from these two, whose adherence to the KPP could be understood, French Cameroonians completely ignored the message of the KPP. They actively opposed the KPP and their Igbo partners during the 1953-54 elections. This contributed to the KNC electoral victories of those years and the gradual shifting of the issue of reunification from the periphery to the centre of the Southern Cameroons politics.

### **C. French Cameroon Immigrants and the KNDP**

Although the successes which were registered by the KNC in the 1953-1954 elections were essentially because it campaigned on a platform of separation from Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroon, Endeley began to talk more and more in favour of

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid, p.65



autonomy with Nigeria. He finally split the KNC when he entered into a formal alliance with the Action Group of Nigeria. Some reasons have been advanced for Endeley's volte-face. Some of his detractors alleged that Chief Awolowo of the Action Group bribed him; others alleged that he was won over by his Yoruba wife to support the Yoruba-dominated Action Group. While still, others held that Endeley had all long supported autonomy within Nigeria but had suppressed it for a while because of political expediency<sup>494</sup>

Endeley's pro-Nigerian stance which, in effect, meant the abandonment of reunification or more precisely immediate reunification, antagonized some prominent KNC members. This was the case with John Ngu Foncha<sup>495</sup> who could not tolerate the idea of staying within Nigeria when the masses wanted the Southern Cameroons out of Nigeria. First and foremost, the people were not happy with the Igbo domination of the administration and trade. They were rich and had become very arrogant and sadistic. They were guilty of vices such as profiteering, counterfeiting, rape, adulteration of palm wine and drugs, land expropriation, fraud, theft etc. They committed a number of oppressive acts in Abakpa market in Bamenda and in the other towns of the Southern Cameroons. A Cameroonian who demanded the price of a commodity sold by an Igbo man was forced to buy it and if he did not, he was badly beaten up.<sup>496</sup>

With these problems, John Ngu Foncha and many Southern Cameroonians were reluctant to continue to preach independence within Nigeria. Furthermore, Foncha who played a key role in the propagation of the KNC message in the Bamenda Grassland was not

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<sup>494</sup> Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884 to 1985*, p. 203.

<sup>46</sup> Some researchers have questioned Foncha's Southern Cameroons or precisely Nkwen origins because of his relations with Dschang and also because the name Foncha is not common in Nkwen. However our findings revealed that after a succession dispute in Nkwen, Foncha's father went on exile to Babajou (French Cameroon) where he stayed for some years. While on exile he certainly established the links with Dschang. John Ngu Foncha as a politician later exploited these links as he worked for reunification. His first daughter, Mary Ngwe Foncha got married to a Dschang man.

<sup>496</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.44.

consulted before the party's platform was changed from reunification with French Cameroon to integration with Nigeria. Foncha therefore accused Dr Emmanuel Endeley of dictatorship. It should also be recalled that despite Foncha's popularity in the Grassland, Dr Emmanuel Endeley excluded him from the KNC government of 1954. All these pointed to the possible departure of John Ngu Foncha from the party.

When the conflict of opinion or even the conflict of personality was at its peak within the KNC, French Cameroonians or precisely UPC leaders interested in keeping the idea of reunification intact in the Southern Cameroons, decided to form another indigenous political party using reunificationists of the KNC to keep the policy alive. In this connection, a secret meeting was held in James Ouandie's house in three corners Fiango Kumba in May 1955 during which the KNDP was founded.<sup>497</sup>

Realizing that John Ngu Foncha, an influential member of the KNC was opposed to Endeley's deviation from the policy of reunification, the UPC leaders, visualized the success of the KNDP under his leadership. Consequently, John Ngu Foncha was taken overnight to Kumba where he was made President of the KNDP. The party was later officially launched in Abakpa, Bamenda in the presence of John Ngu Foncha and his friend William P. Lebaga. Roland Moumie and Ndeh Ntumazah went as far as Wum to campaign for KNDP militants like Augustine Ngom Jua and Patrick Mua<sup>498</sup>.

The UPC origins of the KNDP could be buttressed by the fact that the party's structures were the same like those of the UPC<sup>499</sup>. Secondly, it was Roland Moumie who worked for Jua's membership

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<sup>497</sup>Awasom, 'The Reunification Question in Cameroon History: Was the Bride and Enthusiastic or a Reluctant one, *Africa Today*, 27, 2, 2000, p.4., Mbofung, "The OK party: Origin and Development," Long Essay in History, University of Buea, 1996, p.12. According to Soh Pius, the KNDP was launched in Bamenda on February 1, 1955. Other authors claim that it was in March 1955 that the party was founded in Bamenda.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p.150

in the party and Jua rapidly became the number two of the KNDP. Also few months after the founding of the KNDP, a reunification committee including John Ngu Foncha, Ndeh Ntumazah, Roland Moumie, Abel Kingue and Ernest Ouandie was formed. Moumie was President and Foncha Secretary. These UPC leaders wanted to use this committee to impose their ideology on Foncha.

Lastly, few months later, that is, in 1956 John Ngu Foncha bought a Land Rover (an all season vehicle) which took him to almost all the villages of the Southern Cameroons to implant the KNDP.<sup>500</sup> This could only have been acquired with the financial assistance of French Cameroonian UPCists who were enthusiastic about reunification given that Foncha as a catholic teacher could not have saved much<sup>501</sup>. French Cameroonians were therefore at the origin of the KNDP that later became the powerful motor that conveyed the reunification idea. They were therefore at the origin of the mortal split between the KNC and the KNDP in 1955. In fact they successfully shifted the issue of reunification from the periphery to the very heart of Southern Cameroons politics.

Some scholars, Rubin for instance, have attempted to explain the emergence of the KNDP in some respects accurately and in others inaccurately. According to Rubin, Foncha's break-away from the KNC occurred because Endeley failed to maintain an attitude

of 'benevolent neutrality' in Nigerian politics;...But there is little doubt that ethnic allegiance also played a part in the decision of Foncha, Augustine Ngom Jua and other supporters in the grasslands to break away from the KNC and form the Kamerun National Democratic Party.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>500</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.49.

<sup>501</sup> Up to the year 1956, John Ngu Foncha, although an honourable member of the House of Assembly still maintained his job as Headmaster of Catholic School Mankon. He only applied to stop work in 1956 and the request was accepted by Rev.Father Mathew Nabben.

<sup>502</sup>Rubin, *Cameroon: an African Federation*, p.87.

Rubin's only evidence for this claim is that Foncha, Jua and Muna were grasslanders. This rather explains the contrary because Vincent T. Lainjo, Rev. J. C. Kangsen and J. T. Ndze all grasslanders remained with the KNC. Another more plausible reason for the break-away was the determination of the French Cameroonian reunificationists to sponsor an indigenous reunification party.

It must be pointed out that John Ngu Foncha never initiated the idea of reunification. He, Augustine Ngom Jua and others were only among those who supported the idea when it was first advocated by French Cameroonians within the CNF in 1949. When the KNDP was launched in Bamenda, Foncha stated that his party stood for peaceful co-existence between indigenous natives and tribal groups extraneous to the Cameroons.<sup>503</sup> He made the position of the party quite clear as the years went by. He stated that reunification was consequential upon secession and that secession could place the Southern Cameroons in a position to better negotiate reunification.

The KNDP therefore advocated secession of British Cameroon from Nigeria and evolutionary reunification with French Cameroon. The 1958 KNDP Congress in Mamfe produced a full text of the secession charter of the KNDP in which founding fathers of the party reiterated their determination to preserve the identity of Cameroon and the complete unity of all her people and sections. In a fourteen-point programme, the KNDP outlined in the secession charter what British Cameroons would gain by seceding. These were;

1. We shall avoid being under independent Nigeria.
2. Opening the door for direct negotiations for foreign enterprise.
3. Creating opportunities for Cameroonians to give their best in developing themselves and their country.
4. It will make Cameroon an identified nation.
5. It will enable Her Majesty's Government to shoulder her responsibilities.
6. It will save the Cameroons from being placed in the analogous position now experienced by Togoland.

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<sup>503</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.214.

7. It will accelerate the political and economic advancement of the territory. Promote social progress and raise better standards of living at our own pace.

8. We shall maintain our culture without external interferences.

9. It will give us scope to work out a principle by which we shall unite all sections of our country arbitrarily torn off by foreign powers.

10. It will help us to see into the whole financial structure of the Territory and make it possible for the Government to work out financial policies.

11. It will psychologically inspire the people of the Cameroons to increase productivity through self-sacrifice, building up their country and work speedily towards independence.

12. It will enable us accelerate the Cameroonisation of all departments of public service in the country.

13. The current political advancement of Nigeria has made it imperative for Southern Cameroons to take a definite stand-secession.

14. It is our cherished plan not only to secede from the Federation of Nigeria but also to encourage and promote trade and happy relations among our people with those of other races without distinction by annihilating hate and rancour or thus fostering the spirit of good-will and love.<sup>504</sup>

The KNDP counted on the support of the traditional rulers and Native Authorities and French Cameroonians who had become tired with the policies of the KNC. Immigrants from French Cameroon therefore became militants or sympathizers of the party and influenced the KNDP's support for reunification in many ways.

Dr Godfrey G. Dibue a Duala educated in Nigeria and Britain and Simon Joseph Epale another Duala educated by the CDC were influential members of the KNDP think-tank or brain trust called the Kamerun Society<sup>505</sup>. Created in 1956, the society brought together

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<sup>504</sup> Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, p.59.

<sup>505</sup> Kuoh, *Mon témoignage*, p. 149.

some western- educated intellectuals such as Tamajong Ndumu, S. C. Tamjong, A.D. Mengot, V.C. Nchami, P.E.N Malafa, R.E.W Burnley, F.N. Ndong, E.D Quan, N.A. Ngwa, S.E. Abangwa, I.N.Malafa, J.B. Etame, S. Lyonga, O.S. Ebanja and J. Pefok<sup>506</sup>. They drafted speeches and policy statements for the KNDP and advised the KNDP on the advantages of reunification. When Dr Godfrey G. Dibue was chief medical doctor of the Bamenda Hospital between 1957 and 1959, his residence was a meeting point for these intellectuals and students who promoted the KNDP objectives of reunification<sup>507</sup>.

Dr Godfrey G. Dibue also served as Foncha's private medical doctor and adviser and when Foncha had an accident in Widikum in 1958, he treated Foncha at home<sup>508</sup>. Dr Dibue was also the brain behind Solomon Tandeng Muna's departure from the KNC. A deal was concluded between Solomon Tandeng Muna and Dr Godfrey G. Dibue, which led to some material compensation for Solomon Tandeng Muna to switch from the KNC for KNDP<sup>509</sup>. The deal leading to Muna's departure from the KNC was at the request of John Ngu Foncha and involved the exchange of money. According to Gottlieb Lobe Monekosso, Dr Godfrey Dibue made financial sacrifices more than any other French Cameroonian to let John Ngu Foncha and the KNDP propagate the reunification option<sup>510</sup>. After Fon Galega II who left the KNC for the KNDP in late 1957, Muna's adherence to the KNDP was significant because it consolidated the KNDP grip on the grassland but for Nkambe Division. Dr Godfrey Dibue certainly understood that this Presbyterian teacher had a following and his membership within the KNDP could strengthen the course of reunification. For this reason, he was ready to compensate Muna to abandon integration with Nigeria. Dr Dibue

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Anna Foncha, 89 years, wife of late Foncha, Bamenda, January 8, 2009.

<sup>508</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.57.

<sup>509</sup> Knoch, *Mon témoignage*, p. 150. The relationship between Dibue and Muna developed to the extent that Daniel Muna [Muna's son] later got married to Dibue's daughter.

<sup>510</sup> G. Lobe Monekosso, WHO Regional Director Emeritus, 82years, Buea, January 11, 2010.

was therefore an influential KNDP intellectual of Douala ethnicity who provided moral and material assistance to the reunificationists within the KNDP. He and other civil servants who worked for reunification did so discretely because the law did not permit civil servant to involve in party politics in the Southern Cameroons.

French Cameroon immigrants who could be considered as intellectuals were also instrumental in the spread of the KNDP ideology. Dr Godfrey Dibue, Dr Simon Joseph Epale, and others produced several articles with the help of a printing machine, which Paul Soppo Priso had given the KNDP<sup>511</sup>. These articles which were published in the KNDP newspaper the *Kamerun Times* were either anti-Endeley or pro- Foncha's policies in favour of reunification. Paul Soppo Priso was a Duala born in 1912. . Educated in Douala, he became a prosperous contractor for public works and buildings after the Second World War. He led the *Jeunesse Camerounais Française (Jeucafra)* when it was created in 1938. He was elected into the Territorial Assembly of French Cameroon in 1952 and later became its President. He was a staunch reunificationist. He was part of the UPC campaign caravan that moved from town to town in 1956 campaigning for reunification. KNDP reunification literature was rapidly disseminated in the Southern Cameroons thanks to Paul Soppo Priso's printing machine and the regular publication of the *Kamerun Times*.

Another influential French Cameroonian writer, member of the KNDP think-tank (the Kamerun Society) was Dr Simon Joseph Epale. Born in Bonampako, Mangamba, in the Dibombari Subdivision in the Littoral Region, he migrated to the Southern Cameroons during the Mandate period. After primary, secondary and teacher training education in Nigeria, he served as founding Principal of the Baptist Teachers Preliminary Training College in Soppo, Buea from February 1950 to August 1951 and later in Nkwen, Bamenda from August 1951 to August 1952.

During this period he served as the founding General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Bamenda branch. He later

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

obtained a CDC scholarship to study in Exeter. It was this well trained teacher of French Cameroon ancestry who in 1956 assisted S.A. George, a KNDP baron from Mamfe Division to formulate a seven –point advance toward reunification.



**Plate 5: Simon Joseph Epale**



**Source:** CDC Archives Bota, Limbe

The book titled *Kamerun Unification: Being a discussion of a 7 –point’s solution of the unification problem*, was the first attempt by a KNDP member to describe or outline the form which reunification should take<sup>512</sup>. The first point called on the UN General Assembly to review the two separate Trusteeship Agreements and provide an interim administration of Cameroon under the joint trusteeship of the British and French Governments. Secondly, they proposed that the British and French governments should establish an Anglo-French commission, which would assume the functions which were performed by the Governor General of Nigeria in British Cameroons and French High Commissioner in French Cameroon. Thirdly, “an

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<sup>512</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.95.

Anglo–French Commission of Administration” consisting of two members appointed by both the French and British Governments respectively should be formed. Fourthly, a Council of Ministers should be established to comprise only of Cameroonians. It would also include a premier and the two joint commissioners who would either hold a joint chairmanship or alternating chairmanship of the council<sup>513</sup>. Fifthly, a parliament of two chambers should be established and it should comprise, apart from the Cameroon members, one European member representing the French colons and other European interests. Sixthly, three or four government units should be recognized within the Cameroon nation. They felt that each of these units should exercise legislative and executive functions within each respective unit. This was intended to solve the problem of diversities in Cameroon. Finally they proposed a progressive system of popular elections in the less advance areas. In the more advanced areas, they called for election based on full adult suffrage<sup>514</sup>.

Although the document did not become “the-talk-of-the-town” immediately because many reunificationists had to be cautious due to the UPC guerrilla warfare which was ravaging French Cameroon, it however laid the basis for future discussion. Here it could be argued that it was this document that transformed the vagueness and obscured nature of the reunification notion from its theoretical stance into concrete and practical reality. It became the lantern that lit the path on which pro-reunificationists were to traverse. Its publication was timely because it was at the time the Bamenda Conference (May 28 to June 1, 1956) was being convened to prepare for the 1957 London Conference which included on its agenda a review of the political process in the Southern Cameroon. Epale through this publication therefore greatly influenced the reunification debate.

In 1957 Simon Joseph Epale and Emmanuel Tabi Egbe under the Kamerun Society published the “Economic and Financial

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<sup>513</sup> S.A George, *Kamerun Unification; Being a Discussion of a 7-Point-Solution of the Unification Problem*, London, Carey and Claridge Chelsea, 1956, pp.6-18.

<sup>514</sup> Ibid, pp.18-19.

Problems of the Cameroons’’. The document was highly critical of Nigeria’s economic policy towards the Southern Cameroons since the Second World War. They pointed out that the Southern Cameroons contributed more than its fair share in respect of certain items of the federal expenditure but that the percentage of revenue allocated to it was in no way related to the actual consumptions by the Southern Cameroons<sup>515</sup>. The reasons for this situation, according to them were that the territory had no effective say in deciding how her revenue should be spent. Simon Joseph Epale was simply advocating for reunification by publishing the socio-economic problems of the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria. Since the territory contributed more to federal revenue and received too little in return, Nigeria and the British were to be blamed for the under- development of the Southern Cameroons.

Although the document meant for the Kamerun Society was not widely circulated, its revelations did influence the KNDP barons and the Southern Cameroons educated elite as they marketed the idea of reunification. The publication also made Epale popular within the ranks of the KNDP. As a convincing economist, he served the KNDP as Financial Secretary in Buea at the eve of the termination of British Trusteeship over the Southern Cameroons and as Secretary General in the CDC. After further university studies in London and Oxford, Epale served as the Secretary General of the Economic and Social Council in Yaounde and later Economic Adviser to the Governor of the South West Province.

Apart from intellectuals like Simon Joseph Epale, immigrant traders from French Cameroon also promoted the KNDP reunification campaign because trans-frontier trade was hampered by the Anglo-French border and trade regulations. For example, Paul Sinju ( he was popularly known as Paul Bamileke) born on July 2, 1929 at Balengou village in the Bamileke country, came to Tiko in the Victoria Division in 1939 at the age of 10. He attended Roman Catholic Mission Primary School Tiko from 1942 to 1948 up to Standard V. When he dropped out from school in 1948, he took up a

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<sup>515</sup>Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.168.

part time job as a carrier at the Tiko wharf. From 1950, and at the age of 21, Paul Sinju started business as an itinerant petty trader visiting almost all the markets of the Victoria Division. In 1956, he became very active in cross border trade of goods from the French Cameroon into the British Cameroons. From this time, Sinju became a promoter of the KNDP idea of reunification .By 1960, Paul Sinju had become the chairman of the Tiko council under the banner of the KNDP party<sup>516</sup>. Paul Sinju like many immigrant traders in Bamenda, Kumba, Tiko, Victoria, Buea, Mamfe and Muyuka therefore propagated the reunification idea with the hope that the elimination of frontier controls would enable their trade to prosper.

These traders did not only propagate the KNDP ideas, they also contributed significantly for the financial up keep of the party. According to Paul Sinju, these contributions were intensified in 1960 when John Ngu Foncha toured the Southern Cameroons to raise funds for the plebiscite campaigns. When the fund raising caravan arrived in Tiko, the hall was full of traders of Bamileke origin. The procedure for contribution was that a person's name was called and the amount he was expected to contribute announced before he could mount the rostrum. When it was Paul Sinju's turn, a voice rang across the hall "Mr. Sinju, fifteen Pounds". Sinju retorted no. "That is too small". "I give twenty-five Pounds"<sup>517</sup>. This was the generosity and ambiance that characterized fund raising meetings organized in by French Cameroonians in favour of reunification at the eve of the plebiscite.

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<sup>516</sup> . Monono, *Indigenous Minorities*, p. 228. Sinju invested in cash crop farming and developed a 150 hectare farmland in mile 8 between Ikata and Bafia in the Muyuka sub-division. He also invested in the real estate sector and it is alleged he is landlord of some 60 houses and proprietor of two hotels in Tiko: the Airport and Park Hotels and the Mondial Hotel in Limbe.

<sup>517</sup> Soh, *Paul Sinju. The Business Tycoon: How he rose to Prominence*, Bamenda, T.Tam Printers, 2002, p.122.

## Plate 6: Sinju Paul



**Source:** Sinju Clementine's collection

**NOTE:** Paul Bamileke played an important but discreet role in the collection of funds for the KNDP campaigns

When the KNDP came out in favour of reunification, some leading personalities of Buea and Victoria on the one side, and Douala on the other, initiated some contacts. These contacts not limited to the UPC or KNDP leadership resulted in two friendship societies in late 1956; the committee of ladies and Gentlemen to promote friendship between French and British Cameroonians in Victoria and *Des Amis du Cameroun Britanique* at Douala<sup>518</sup>. These societies exchanged visits thus permitting French Cameroonians to influence the reunification debate in the Southern Cameroons.

Cameroonians from the trust territory of French Cameroon also influenced the reunification debate in several ways. They supported

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<sup>518</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.132.

the KNDP's drive for reunification morally and financially. For example, in a confidential letter to Paul Soppo Priso dated October 10 1956 John Ngu Foncha requested, on behalf of the KNDP, financial assistance from "Our brother in Eastern Kamerun" to counter the KNC/KPP alliance which, unlike the KNDP was against reunification<sup>519</sup>. In the letter, John Ngu Foncha also assured Paul Soppo Priso leader of the National Union of French Cameroon (the National Union of French Cameroon with the exception of the UPC was the most pro-unification force in French Cameroon) that he would work for and achieve reunification before the independence of the Southern Cameroons<sup>520</sup>. Amongst other things, he said;

To achieve a quick move towards unification, the member union should help each other. Financial help is indispensable. The KNC and KPP which advocate integration with Nigeria drew financial help from political parties in Nigeria. We have denied this because we are working truly for unification and hope that our brothers in Eastern Kamerun will give us the necessary help we need.

We want to assure you that the KNDP is the biggest political party in the Southern Cameroons which is working for unification. The national Union should therefore recognize this fact and deal directly with the KNDP Secretariat. We are only Friends to the UPC and not subordinate to it. The KNDP is therefore determined to pursue its plan of separation quickly from Nigeria but cautiously and tenaciously. May we again assure you of our confidence in the National Union and in the move you are taking in so far as it compares favourably in our move to unification....

On behalf of the KNDP and those who love unification in the Southern Cameroons, we wish you and others comrades God's blessing and success in the work of unifying and shaping the destiny of Kamerun.

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<sup>519</sup> Ngoh, "John Ngu Foncha and the Reunification Saga", p. 342.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid, p. 343.



Sign. Paul A. Fongu (Secretary General)  
W.F. Lebaga (Publicity Secretary)  
J.N. Foncha (President General).<sup>521</sup>

The KNDP appeal letter to Paul Soppo Priso certainly yielded fruits because in 1956, John Ngu Foncha bought an all-terrain Land rover vehicle which he used for the implantation of the KNDP in Cameroon.<sup>522</sup> With this Land rover, Foncha toured all the villages in Nkambe, Nso, Wum, Bamenda, Mamfe, Kumba, Victoria, Buea, Tiko, Muyuka, Tombel and Meta land to enlist adherence and appoint local party officials. This approach of grassroots politics greatly accounted for the tremendous rise in KNDP popularity between 1956 and 1958. Financial support from French Cameroonians was therefore instrumental in the rapid propagation of the KNDP ideology.

In a move to re-enforce its reunification option and get more French Cameroonians support, John Ngu Foncha in 1958, created a branch of the KNDP in Douala. He also associated the KNDP with a non-political organization, the committee for the reunification of the Cameroon (COREC), which was based in Douala<sup>523</sup>. In 1958 John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna visited French Cameroon and were received by Paul Soppo Priso and probably received by premier Ahmadou Ahidjo. These contacts made some French Cameroonians to become energetic supporters of reunification as they organized fund raising campaigns for the KNDP and reunification. For example, Douala Yondo who spoke English and French organized fundraising campaigns during this period for the KNDP. Douala Yondo also served as Foncha's principal contact with immigrant or itinerant British Cameroonians as well as Eastern sympathizers. French Cameroonians participated more in the

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<sup>521</sup> NAB, file A/c 4/L591/Rev: UN General Assembly. Fourteenth Session, Fourth Committee, Agenda item 1, October 19, 1959, p.10.

<sup>48</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.49

<sup>523</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 133.

reunification debate when the exiled leaders of the UPC arrived the Southern Cameroons in 1955.

#### **D. French Cameroon Immigrants and the UPC**

Radical nationalism in French Cameroon started after the Second World War. In September 1945, there were riots in the territory. The trade unionists members of the USCC who led the riots created a political movement in 1947 called the *Rassemblement Camerounais* (RACAM). The idea of RACAM was first discussed during the UNICAFRA congress of March 30 to April 6, 1947. On April 14, 1947, nine men, including Um Nyobe filed the statutes of RACAM as required by law at the City Hall in Douala.

The party's very name, which contained no mention of France, gave a clue to its orientation. Its mission was to secure independence for French Cameroon conforming with the UN Charter, for which Article 4 of the Trusteeship Agreement did not seem to make allowance, at least at that period, since according to that article France administered Cameroon as "an integral part of French territory". It was against this pure and simple assimilation, it was against this integration of Cameroon in the French Union that the RACAM set itself. The RACAM also requested self-government for the territory and radicalized its activities.

With these objectives, the statutes of RACAM were not approved and the party was officially denounced by the High Commissioner. The trade unionists had to produce both a new organisation and a message they hoped would have more appeal. This new organisation was the UPC. It was created on April 10, 1948 in Douala, French Cameroon. It was created by Leonard Bouly on the ruins of the RACAM.

The UPC goal as stated in the first article of its statutes in rather general terms was 'to group and unite the inhabitants of the territory in order to permit the most rapid evolution of the peoples and the raising of their standard of living'.<sup>524</sup> The administration accepted the

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<sup>524</sup> Cited in Gardinier, *Cameroons*, p.44



UPC'S statutes. On June 17, 1948, the UPC incorporated the local *Rassemblement Democratique Africain* (RDA) group and became the official Cameroon section of the RDA. This was an indication that the party was going to become more radical and critical of the French than the RACAM.

The integration of the RDA was followed by the elaboration of a programme which would not have been acceptable if it had been part of the statutes. The programme included three key political goals;

1-The suppression of the 'artificial boundaries' created in 1916 between the two Cameroons

2-Abandonment by France of its policy of assimilation

3-Fixing of a time limit for trusteeship, after which Cameroon would achieve independence.<sup>525</sup>

The party also gradually revealed its objectives to include the struggle for the independence of French Cameroon and reunification with British Cameroons. Apart from this political part of the UPC platform, the party also advocated the fight against racial segregation and called for the extension of the system of secondary education without any discrimination. Economically, the UPC called for the fight against discrimination in the prices of raw material.

By the 'abandonment of assimilation', the UPC meant the suppression of Article 4 of the Trusteeship Agreement under which France was able to administer the territory. The UPC sought the establishment of a separate political regime for Cameroon which would include a territorial legislative assembly and an executive with Cameroonian ministers.

The UPC therefore drew up a programme for political emancipation of Cameroon, which was bound to bring it into conflict with the colonial administration if it gained a significant following. With this platform; the party rapidly became popular, the first indigenous party ready to fight the colonial master. It won over some popular traditional organizations, which became its sub-organs and consequently its mobilizing machinery in the suburbs. These included the *Ngondo* of the Duala, the *Kumze* of the Bamileke and the

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<sup>525</sup>Ibid, p.45.

*Union Tribale Bantou* of the Bulu. The party also became popular with the workers in the economically advanced south and with the Bassa, Bamileke, Duala, Bulu and Ewondo people. Its propaganda instruments included newspapers like the *Voix du peuple du Cameroun*, *l'Etoile*, *Lumière* and *la Vérité*. These sub-organs and newspapers made the UPC such national party that its influence could not be limited to French Cameroon.

Furthermore, the second congress of the party that held in Eseka in September 1952 witnessed the election of more radical leaders like Dr Roland Moumie as president, Um Nyobe as Secretary General, Abel Kingue as vice-president, Ernest Ouandie as vice-president and Joseph Kamsi as treasurer. This new team engaged the French authorities in a series of quarrels between 1951 and 1955. French hostilities towards the UPC took several forms. Civil servants who were known to be UPCists were transferred to remote areas; UPC was denied the use of public facilities for its meetings while UPC newspapers were banned. The conflict culminated in the May 1955 rebellion which was followed by massive exodus to the Southern Cameroons.

Immediately the UPC was founded in 1948, it attempted to penetrate and influence the politics of the Southern Cameroons. The result was the UPC-KUNC Alliance of 1951/1952. Even when this alliance collapsed, the UPCists remained in contact with the territory and bothered about the welfare of its people. For example, Mr Pius Bayigonong of the UPC New-Bell committee in Douala petitioned the UN on November 14, 1954 on the situation in the Southern Cameroons in the following words:

In the Cameroon under British administration, the situation is as follows: no hospital, no dispensaries, and no maternity ward or child care centres. The high mortality rate resulting from the Administering Authorities' negligence plunges the country into mourning day after day. A large population is living deep in the bush and has absolutely no roads. In order to better exploit this sea of humanity, the British and their lackeys gild the pill for our brothers in this region by telling them not to raise the question of

reunification lest they should be incorporated in the French colonial Empire.<sup>526</sup>

French Cameroonians painted such vivid pictures of the Southern Cameroons with the hope to convince the UN to accept reunification.

French Cameroonians intensified their political activities and the propagation of the reunification idea in the Southern Cameroons following the arrival of some UPC leaders in the territory in 1955. When the French outlawed the UPC in French Cameroon in July 1955 after the May 1955 rebellion, several of its leaders, almost all of them from the Bamileke and Douala factions of the party, made their way across the border to the Southern Cameroons. Roland Felix Moumie, Ernest Ouandie, Abel Kingue and other members of the executive bureau led the fleeing militants to Kumba<sup>527</sup>. Many hundreds of their compatriots also fled to Tiko, Victoria, Buea and Bamenda. The 1955 UN visiting mission noted the presence of an unknown number of persons from French Cameroon certainly political refugees who were to constitute a new element in the politics of the Southern Cameroons<sup>528</sup>

The UPC refugees who arrived in the Southern Cameroons benefited from the hospitality of the host population as can be seen from their letter to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees on December 5, 1955. In the letter, the refugees in Tiko cried for help in the following words;

...Since May 25, 1955, when the French Government opened fire on the innocent and unarmed Cameroonian people, approximately 5,000 Cameroonians fled from the reign of terror in the French zone and sought asylum in the British part of the Territory. Thus, in the past seven months, 5,000 Cameroonian

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<sup>526</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1956/5, Petitions Concerning British and French Cameroons, p.6.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

refugees, who have abandoned their families and property, are living in the British Zone, lacking food and clothing and suffering from disease and unemployment. Thanks to the hospitality of their African brother, they have managed to survive when the income of the givers is so small. The future of the 5,000 Cameroonian refugees in the British Zone therefore looks bleak, as there does not seem to be any immediate prospect of these unfortunate people being able to return to their country of origin.

The Cameroonian committee of refugees therefore has the honour to apply to you for help. It relies on the humanitarian spirit of the Organization which you represent and hopes that, through your action, the lives of these thousands of poor black people, who have committed no crime other than believing in the right of people to self-determination, will be preserved.<sup>529</sup>

Felix Roland Moumie who led the group was born in 1926 at Fouban and was educated at *Ecole Normale* William Ponty near Dakar, Senegal. After obtaining a medical degree he returned to French Cameroon to join the UPC. The second UPC leader in the Southern Cameroons was Ernest Ouandie who was born in 1924 in the Bamileke Division. He was educated locally and took up teaching in 1940. In 1948, he helped to found the UPC and he was its vice President in 1952.

When Roland Felix Moumie reached the Southern Cameroons, he first contacted Endeley, the parliamentary leader of the KNC. Dr Emmanuel Endeley is alleged to have been quite unsympathetic to the UPC group and their forceful advocacy of reunification. Moumie then went to Bamenda where he met Foncha head of the KNDP. Foncha's reunification program was similar to that of Moumie and the two leaders created a Reunification Committee with Roland Moumie as President and John Ngu Foncha as Secretary<sup>530</sup>. John Ngu Foncha personally provided Roland Moumie and his friends with a house and provisions in Bamenda. Collaboration between Foncha's

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<sup>529</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1956, Union of the Populations of the Cameroons, p.17.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

KNDP and Moumie's UPC did not last long. While John Ngu Foncha wanted evolutionary reunification, Roland Moumie insisted on immediate independence and reunification. Roland Moumie also succeeded to entice the KNDP branch secretary in Bamenda, Ndeh Ntumazah to join the UPC in touring the country and implanting the UPC party<sup>531</sup>. Ndeh Ntumazah's departure from the KNDP for the UPC was evidence that the UPC could be a threat to the KNDP and Foncha had to abandon the alliance. The KNDP-UPC alliance also collapsed because John Ngu Foncha later faced opposition in Bamenda from the Roman Catholic Church for having joined a communist oriented party. This caused Foncha to drop the idea of immediate independence and reunification terming the UPC communist. John Ngu Foncha could not also continue to accommodate the UPCists because they were against the House of Chiefs and the involvement of chiefs in politics.

By 1956, Moumie's UPC was getting well established and well organized as a political party to reckon with in the Southern Cameroons<sup>532</sup>. The party also enjoyed backing among the Southern Cameroonians groups along the border areas (Bakossi, Mbo, Bangwa, Bamboko, Bakolle and Bakweri) who shared close cultural and historic affinities with the Bamileke, Bamoun, Douala and Mbo groups in French Cameroon. These groups perceived UPC's campaign for reunification as a possible solution to the severe border controls that restricted trade between people living on both sides of the border and also made it difficult for friends and relations to visit each other.

Unlike most Southern Cameroon parties that could be considered elitist, the UPC was the only well-organized party in the Southern Cameroon with branches in many of the urban as well as rural areas. Part of the reason for the popularity of the UPC was its strong support for independence and reunification and the fact that it represented the interest of many ordinary Southern Cameroonians and French Cameroon immigrants. For example, it was emphatic in

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid, p.130.

<sup>532</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p 98.

its condemnation of colonial oppression and exploitation and the privileged “lives that Europeans in the territory enjoyed vis-a-vis Cameroonians”.<sup>533</sup> However, the UPC failed to establish a base of any significance outside the areas heavily settled by French Cameroonians<sup>534</sup>.

French Cameroonian domination of the UPC in the Southern Cameroons was quite evident. UPC militants in Tiko, Victoria, Muyuka, Kumba and Bamenda were largely immigrants from French Cameroon<sup>535</sup>. The Muyuka local committee of the party had as executive bureau members: Jacob Ngantchou, Alexander Ngassa, Abel Nkonga, and Rene Conrad all French Cameroonians<sup>536</sup>. The Kumba local committee had as leaders Paul Nguidjol Paul, Nicolas Mbikoi, Clement Mouso, Richard Kaping Tongo, Kamen Sakio and Philip Maufo. The UPC Three Corner Kumba, local committee was led by French Cameroonians such as Rene Kamnde, Fidel Nembot, Jonas Fiodjo, Janvier Noumbi, Gaston Tchambou, Anthony Forze and Louis Njomo<sup>537</sup>.

They were the signatories of the August 1956 petition to the commissioner of the Southern Cameroons following the fire incident that destroyed UPC property in Bamenda. The UPC local committee in Missellele was also led by Peter Nge, Nonga orgen, Libogue Bernard and Buye Isaac all of them French Cameroonians<sup>538</sup>. These few examples indicate that the UPC in the Southern Cameroons was largely the business of French Cameroonians settlers.

Apart from the UPC local committees that were animated by French Cameroonians, the women and youths organs were also in their hands. The Cameroon Democratic Youth held the second congress in Kumba from November 30 to December 2, 1956. The leaders were Theodore Mayi Matip as President, Ngembus Williams as Vice President, Fosso François as secretary, Ndjog Aloys Marie as

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<sup>533</sup> Takougang, “The UPC and its Southern Cameroons Connections”, p.12.

<sup>534</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 130.

<sup>535</sup> NAB, File, vb/b 1957/3, The Union of the Populations of Cameroon, p.9.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>538</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1956/1, UPC, p.9.

Propaganda Secretary and Djomo Jean as General Treasurer<sup>539</sup>. The Cameroon Women Democratic Union leaders in Kumba were Youalley Julis and Marie –Irene Ngapeth<sup>540</sup>. The women were also very active in the propagation of the reunification idea. For example, on February 23, 1956, Mesdames Marie Moumie, Adda Tjade and Antoinette Biyong petitioned the UN from Kumba, asking the UN to listen to Cameroonian democratic organizations despites slanderous allegations from the French.<sup>541</sup> The petition that was written in French also protested against Dr Endeley's call for integration with Nigeria reaffirming the wish of Cameroonians for reunification

All UPC–organized public lectures in the Southern Cameroons had as principal speakers Soppo Priso, Abel Kingue and Roland Moumie<sup>542</sup>. The UPC sub organs, political rallies, public lectures, meetings and demonstrations were therefore largely in the hands of French Cameroonians who even used the French language more often than Pidgin English in their deliberations.

Despite the French Cameroonian domination of the UPC, the British colonial authorities and the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, J. O. Field welcomed the party and declared that it had the right to exist in the territory like any other political party<sup>543</sup>. According to Field, there was no problem having many political parties in the Southern Cameroons. Furthermore the UPC refugees in the Southern Cameroons were not communists as it was alleged in French Cameroon. The British authorities convinced Dr Emmanuel Endeley to accept the participation of the UPC in the politics of the Southern Cameroons. The UPC therefore organized public lectures in Victoria, Bota, Buea, Kumba, Mamfe, Bamemda, Tiko, Muyuka and Missellele in 1956. Under the leadership of Abel Kingue, Felix Roland Moumie and Paul Soppo Priso, the party also wrote several

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<sup>539</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1960/10, political Parties, p. 29.

<sup>540</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1957/3, The Union of the Populations of the Cameroon, p. 59.

<sup>541</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1956/5 Petitions concerning British and French Cameroons, p.11.

<sup>542</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1957/3, p.9.

<sup>543</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*, p. 211, Aka, *British Southern Cameroon* p.203.

petitions to the UN in favour of reunification. It is reported that French Cameroonians pressurized the UN to get reunification more than the Southern Cameroonians. For example, in 1957 alone, about 4,840 communications in form of reports, resolutions, motions, and memoranda, petitions of protest and appeal letters were written to the UN by these settlers requesting the reunification of the Cameroons. Many of these communications were marked “*sous maquis*” while others carried addresses in the Southern Cameroons<sup>544</sup>.

The hospitality accorded the UPC was not shared by all the Cameroonians especially when the UPC failed to cooperate with John Ngu Foncha and accept his idea of gradual rather than immediate reunification. French Cameroonians UPC leaders were not invited to the Bamenda conference, May-June 1956 which was aimed at adopting a common platform for the Southern Cameroons which would be presented to the British Government at the 1957 Constitutional Conference<sup>545</sup>. The absence of the UPC on the list of parties to attend this conference was petitioned by the UPC local committee of Missellele represented by Bernard Libogue and Isaac Buye. They wrote to the Governor at Lagos on May 18, 1956 requesting for UPC representation at the Bamenda conference.<sup>546</sup> They complained about the marginalization of the party by Endeley’s government and attempts to stifle the reunification struggle.

The UPC also faced opposition from the traditional rulers who in 1956 called for the creation of a House of Chiefs and for autonomy within Nigeria. Following this declaration, Roland Moumie wrote to the Governor General of Nigeria in July 1956 indicating that the chiefs had no place in political affairs.<sup>547</sup> The reaction of the UPC leaders to the position of the chiefs led to serious conflicts between the traditional rulers and UPC leaders from French Cameroon.

As tension mounted, the UPC office in Bamenda was burnt by unknown people at 10:30pm on August 4, 1956. The fire broke out

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<sup>544</sup> NAB, file vb/b1956/5, Petitions Concerning British and French Cameroons, p.24.

<sup>545</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1956/1, UPC, p.9.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid, p.84.



on the day Roland Moumie and Abel Kingue addressed a public meeting in Bamenda. At the time of the fire, Moumie and Kingue were attending a nearby dance. Two French Cameroonians refugees, members of the UPC who were sleeping in the house, managed to escape<sup>548</sup>. On December 12, 1956, the UPC office in Santa was also destroyed by fire<sup>549</sup>. The UPC strangers blamed everything on the British agents in the Southern Cameroons. The British, on their part denied any involvement and tended to blame everything on people coming across the border from French Cameroon<sup>550</sup>. Unlike in Victoria and Kumba where UPC lecturers were given permission for the same day, in Bamenda and Mamfe, the UPC leaders needed to inform the police seven days before the lecture. This was intimidation and Ernest Ouandie; UPC vice president criticized it in a letter to the Deputy Commissioner for the British Southern Cameroons on May 5, 1957<sup>551</sup>.

Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue also overtly accused the UPC of communist inclinations and plans to destabilize the Southern Cameroons. The party's radical and Marxist rhetoric and the violence it had engendered in the French Cameroon, especially after the May 1955 riots made Dibongue to fear that if left unchecked, the growing UPC influence might lead to similar problems in the Southern Cameroons. The accusations that were in the *Daily Times* of July 16 and 23, 1956 indicated that UPC activities could lead to bloodshed in the territory.<sup>552</sup> On August 21, 1956 Roland Moumie addressed a letter to the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons to clear doubts on these accusations. The UPC indicated that they were neither pro- nor anti- communist. This accusation had caused Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue to break the KUNC-UPC alliance of 1951 by gradually abandoning the reunification cause.

Although the UPCists from French Cameroon were relatively new in the Southern Cameroons, they aggressively sought to become

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<sup>548</sup> NAB, file Vb/b. 1957/3, p. 62.

<sup>549</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 258.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1956/1, /UPC, p. 112.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

important players in the territory's political development. Such tactics were repugnant to many Southern Cameroon politicians, long-time residents and prominent members of the French Cameroonian community who had grown used to the more peaceful and "constitutional" approach that had characterized political developments in the Southern Cameroons. Joseph Henry Ngu and Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue foremost reunificationists and advocates for French Cameroonian rights in the territory became staunch opponents of the UPC because of the ambitions of its leaders. These two leaders were irritated at efforts by Roland Moumie to undermine their influence and authority in the Southern Cameroons especially within the French Cameroonian community. It was this hostile relation or friction between the UPC leaders and the long-time settlers that prompted the District Officer for Victoria Division, A. K. Wright to remark in a letter to the Commissioner on July 17, 1956 that "the UPC leaders had no support even among their own 'countrymen' in the division."<sup>553</sup>

French Cameroon UPC leaders also became unpopular with the Endeley regime because on October 26, 1956, Gilbert Dingue wrote a petition against Endeley's declarations during the seventeenth session of the Trusteeship Council. During the session, Endeley said that the population of the Southern Cameroons was in favour of integration with Nigeria. In fact when the UN Mission came to Cameroon in 1955, Endeley advocated secession and reunification but as soon as the Mission departed from Cameroon, Endeley in 1956 followed it to New York where he demanded only rapid constitutional advancements to bring the Southern Cameroons to the status of a full self-governing region within the Nigerian context. The UPC petitioners claimed that the declaration did not reflect the wishes and aspirations of the people. Foncha also disassociated himself and the KNDP from Endeley's "private" and "personal" views since Endeley was not mandated by the "people".<sup>554</sup> This UPC challenge to Endeley's position and stance could not be tolerated.

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<sup>553</sup> Takougang, "The UPC and its Southern Cameroons Connection", p.18.

<sup>554</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p.97.

UPC militants from French Cameroon were not only dreaded by Endeley. The Chiefs were also opposed to UPC activities because at several instance Roland Moumie and his followers opposed the creation of the House of Chiefs and indicated that the chiefs had no place in politics. On December 15, 1956, the executive members of the Chief's Conference wrote a report to the Commissioner for the Cameroons against the UPC. Part to the letter read as follows:

...We the undersigned executive members of the Chief's Conference, Southern Cameroons, consider it our duty to bring to the notice of Government the disruptive and mischievous activities of the refugee political movement known as and called "UNION DES POPULATIONS DU CAMEROUN" which are threatening to undermine the well-established tribal institutions if not the very existence of the Southern Cameroons as a cohesive political entity.

It is now history that when these fugitives sought asylum in the Southern Cameroons under British administration we received them with open arms as our kith and kin. We were then under the impression that the repressive measures resorted to by the officials of the French Administering Authority(SIC) to render this notoriously disreputable political movement harmless had been motivated mainly by a determination to stifle positive and articulated nationalism in the French section of Cameroon.

Alas, we were soon to be disillusioned, for it is rapidly dawning upon us that these ill-disposed men are all out, true to type, to disrupt and sabotage the smooth and orderly running of our local political institutions...Since the UPC are(SIC) determined not only to undermine our authority but also to cause chaos in this territory, we would earnestly request Government to check the police from interfering and leave Native Authority (SIC) to exercise their powers under the provisions of Native Authority Ordinance (SIC) in order to restrain these bad men from their provocative activities in their respective areas...<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>555</sup> NAB, file vb/b/1956/1, UPC, pp.84-86.

With the Chiefs against the UPC, it was certain that the population could support any anti-UPC campaign. Endeley therefore opened hostilities against Moumie and his militants.

Hostilities towards the French Cameroonian dominated UPC continued at the eve of the 1957 elections. This was because their influence was spreading in the urban and rural areas and they were clamouring for representation in most institutions. Roland Moumie even started the construction of a UPC secretariat in Santa. They were requested to apply for statutory declaration to qualify for registration on voters list. They had to justify their long stay in the Southern Cameroons and tax payment. The applicants took an oath in October 1956 before the commissioner for oaths that their declarations were correct<sup>556</sup>. With these conditions, only settlers who could show prove of tax payment and long residence registered as voters.

On February 5, 1957 few days to the elections, UPC offices in the Southern Cameroons were searched. The British explained that the searches were carried out because the police had reason to believe that a number of type writers reportedly stolen from French Cameroon might be found in the UPC offices in the Southern Cameroons<sup>557</sup>. No typewriters were found but during the search, prohibited literature and a number of documents in French were found and collected<sup>558</sup>. With these intimidations, Moumie and his party lost the election. He needed a forum such as the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly where he could continue to preach reunification and from which to continue to petition the UN. The failure to win seats in the Assembly in 1957 was therefore frustrating.

In a letter to the colonial secretary on the London Constitutional Conference dated April 15, 1957 Roland Moumie indicated that the UPC did not win seats to take part in the London Conference because of fraud<sup>559</sup>. Roland Moumie insisted that the six KNC seats

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<sup>556</sup> PAB, file NW/VA/a 1957/1, Statutory Declaration of French Camerounians as Voters in the Southern Cameroons Elections, 1957.

<sup>557</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 258.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1956/1, UPC, p. 105.

won during the 1957 elections were obtained through fraud and were less than half the thirteen seats of the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly. The UPC also complained that the system of representation was outdated for a country like Cameroon. In Victoria for example, the UPC had 1110 votes but was not represented while the native authority with 9 votes was represented. In Kumba the UPC with 2221 votes was not represented while the native authority with 28 votes was declared member of the House. The UPC was therefore against a system that gave the chiefs undue advantages. However, apart from fraud, all UPC candidates were easily defeated because the party failed to establish a base of any significance outside the areas heavily settled by French Cameroonians.

On May 30, 1957, the British banned the UPC alongside the Cameroon Democratic Youth and the Kamerun Women's Democratic Union. The British claimed that the leaders may resort to violence in order to achieve their objectives in the Southern Cameroons<sup>560</sup>. In declaring the UPC unlawful, the government of Nigeria issued a public statement which read:

The emergence in Nigeria of this alien political organization dates from the month of May 1955, when its leaders sought asylum across the frontier between the territories of the southern Cameroons and the Cameroons under French administration... During the past twelve months, however there have been increasingly stronger indications that they and their party constitute an ever-present threat to law and order in the southern Cameroons... There now exist a grave possibility that in order to achieve its political objectives, the party may have to resort to violence in the southern Cameroons<sup>561</sup>....

The UPC leaders were therefore also outlawed and the Governor-General of Nigeria issued a deportation order against thirteen of them, all French Cameroonians<sup>562</sup>. According to Dr Roland Moumie their deportation was:

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<sup>560</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p.100.

<sup>561</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 100.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

Part of the same scheme for the powers with territorial control of Africa to weaken the struggle of the African people to achieve their independence. Britain and France supported each other in suppressing the desires of the people for freedom<sup>563</sup>.

J. Manga-Williams of the Victoria Divisional Council meeting also reported to the Governor –General of Nigeria through the Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons in June 1957 that the activities of the UPC, Cameroon Democratic Youth and Kamerun Women's Democratic Union were unlawful in Victoria<sup>564</sup>. In fact almost all the political factions in the Southern Cameroons considered the exiled UPC leaders as unwanted and troublesome people by 1957. However before the party was banned and its French Cameroonians leaders expelled, it had attracted a number of young people and students. These supporters of the banned UPC formed the OK and continued with the reunification crusade.

### **E. French Cameroon Immigrants and the OK**

When the UPC was outlawed, its young supporters formed the OK with the financial backing of some French Cameroonians<sup>565</sup>. This was a new forum for French Cameroonians to advocate immediate reunification, immediate independence and the creation of a Cameroon nation free from foreign influences. The initiative for the formation of the OK was taken by Ndeh Akanga and Ndeh Ntumazah. Ndeh Ntumazah who became president of the OK had a family in French Cameroon and had spent some years there<sup>566</sup>. Born in Mankon in 1926, Ntumazah was educated locally until 1944 when he left to join his brother in Douala. In Douala he joined the UPC and later married a young Bassa woman. Like John Ngu Foncha,

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> NAB, file vb/b 1957/3, p.31.

<sup>565</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p 203.

<sup>566</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 45.

Ndeh Ntumazah another Southern Cameroons reunificationist therefore also had French Cameroon influence.

The Secretary Benedict Yalla Eballa, Publicity Secretary George Mbaraga and the Treasurer Joseph Innocent Nkamsi were all French Cameroonians<sup>567</sup>. Amongst them, Nkamsi was the most senior official because since 1952 he was already serving the UPC as party Treasurer General. He was elected to this post during the 1952 Eseka congress. His task was to continue to collect funds to sponsor Ntumazah's missions to the UN. The principal spokesman of the OK was therefore Joseph Innocent Nkamsi and his petitions and memoranda were all in the French language<sup>568</sup>. He also served the party as vice president and many observers believed he was the real founder of the party who only relegated himself to a second position because he was not a British protected person. Ntumazah was in fact a "figure-head" of the OK and this post was given him because unlike Joseph Nkamsi, he was a British protected person and could travel freely in and out of the territory.<sup>569</sup> The OK like the UPC had its strongest support in Kumba and Victoria Divisions in which the majority of French Cameroonians resided.

Apart from its involvement in the reunification debate in the Southern Cameroons, the OK also supported the activities of the UPC *maquis* in the Bamileke Region. In March 1958, for example, six members of the party (all French Cameroonians) were arrested in Santa, near the border with the French Cameroon for possession of drugs and party pamphlets destined for the French Cameroon. Four of the men were later found guilty under section 176 of the criminal code and sentenced to pay 50 pounds or serve six months in prison. They were also to be repatriated to the French Cameroon, after they had served their jailed sentence. Later in the same month, an official of the UPC in the Bamileke Region was arrested in Mankon, Bamenda, in possession of 7,599francs which was alleged to have been raised on behalf of the UPC at the OK convention in

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<sup>567</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 203.

<sup>568</sup> NAB, file Td 1958/8, UN Visiting Mission, p.54.

<sup>569</sup> Takougang, "The UPC and its Southern Cameroons Connection", p.22.

Kumba<sup>570</sup>. The OK was therefore determined to continue the UPC struggle for reunification.

French Cameroonians within the OK joined or continued with the reunification debate in October 1958 when the UN Visiting Mission arrived in the territory. On October 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 1958, the UN Mission met about 60 representative of Cameroonians in Lagos and Ibadan. All but one of their spokesmen asked for reunification. A memorandum from a union of French and British Cameroons Youths in Nigeria also asked for the reunification of the Cameroons. At the university college of Ibadan the mission gave a hearing to the Ibadan –Kamerun students Association (IKSA), formed by about 20 students from Cameroon with four from French Cameroon<sup>571</sup>. The French Cameroonians were led by Boniface Nasah, member of the Students' Strategic Committee for Kameruns' Secession and Reunification. Some of the French Cameroonians were studying in Nigeria with OK assistance.

While in Victoria the Mission met the Solidarity Society of French Cameroon immigrants and refugees with Frédéric Batoum as spokesman. Frédéric Batoum presented a list of names of more than 2000 people from French Cameroon allegedly seeking political asylum in the Southern Cameroons. The “poor Women” and “Young Boys” were remarkable for their dress, which appeared to be a kind of uniform consisting of various arrangements of red, black and white<sup>572</sup>. During the hearing the “Poor Women” presented a memo written in French which was headed *Union Démocratique des femmes Camerounaise* (UDEFEC), the name of the outlawed UPC women's affiliate. The Young Boys presented a memo in French headed *Jeunesse Démocratique du Cameroun* (JDC), the outlawed Youth affiliate of the UPC. All of them asked for reunification<sup>573</sup>.

The Bamendjou Family Union of French Cameroonians requested general political amnesty, the reunification of the

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<sup>570</sup> Ibid, p.23.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>572</sup> NAB, file Td 1958/8 UN Visiting Mission, p.10.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid.



Cameroons, the abrogation of the decision to dissolve the UPC and its affiliates in both French and British Cameroon. Several other groups of political refugees and now OK militants addressing the mission in French and including women in uniform red and black dress, asked for a general amnesty and reunification<sup>574</sup>. When the team arrived in Mamfe, a group of people originating from the Cameroon under French administration, who said that they had arrived before the “troubles” of 1955, asked for fuller representation of their interest in the House of Assembly, the proposed House of chiefs, the Native Courts, scholarship committees and the local administrations<sup>575</sup>.

After Bamenda where OK petitions in the French language also requested reunification, the UN Mission arrived Kumbo on November 5, 1958. In Kumbo the mission received the local branch of the OK and remarked that “it was one of the few OK groups encountered anywhere in the territory whose petitions were written in English rather than in French and whose members, in fact did not appear to have originated for the most part from the other side of the frontier”<sup>576</sup>.

## **F. OK, KNDP and KNC Stance on the Reunification Question**

At the end of the 1958 mission, the UN team rightly concluded that most members of the OK came from French Cameroon and that the principal spokesman of the OK was the French Cameroonians Joseph Innocent Kamsi who wrote a memo in Kumba on October 29, 1958 to the UN on behalf of the OK in French<sup>577</sup>. The UN team also concluded that the OK devoted much of its

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<sup>574</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid, p 18.

<sup>576</sup> Ibid, p.23.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid, p.54, However Kamsi played this key role probably because Ntumazah was too often at the United Nations in 1958. It should however be understood that the real initiator of the OK was Nkamsi who like Dibongue, needed a British protected person to shield him from the British colonial authorities.

spoken and written arguments for reunification [nearly all of them in French], to the discriminations against French Cameroonians and recrimination about the past<sup>578</sup>.

While Joseph Innocent Kamsi, French Cameroonians or the Ok argued that the Cameroonians of both zones and of all classes of society were in favour of the unity and independence of the country, Dr Emmanuel Endeley leader of the KNC-KPP informed the UN team that new events and circumstances had removed the question of reunification out of the realm of urgency and priority in which he had earlier placed it. He stressed that reunification was not provided for in the Trusteeship Agreement and that French Cameroon and British Cameroons had developed separately with different political and cultural systems and prejudiced with these developments; it was unlikely that the Cameroons would ever return to the status it was before 1914<sup>579</sup>.

Dr Emmanuel Endeley also went ahead to indicate that freedom of expression, of political activity and of movement which characterized Southern Cameroons were lacking in French Cameroon. It was therefore clear the “colonial oneness” of Kamerun had been weakened by the enforced partition “and the passage of time” had but forced the partition “to assume a regrettable degree of permanence.” Southern Cameroons could not forgo the advantages it had derived from the British Government. Rather than leap into “an uncertain French Cameroon Federation” the Southern Cameroons would continue in the Federation of Nigeria<sup>580</sup>. Endeley and his KNC-KPP followers therefore rejected the reunification of the two Cameroons.

On the other hand, John Ngu Foncha and the KNDP presented a memorandum insisting on secession from Nigeria in order to maintain a national identity. John Ngu Foncha predicated reunification on secession and therefore made secession the beginning of reunification. However Foncha indicated that

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid, p 53.

<sup>579</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 112.

<sup>580</sup> Cited in Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 113.

reunification still had to be confirmed by the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly<sup>581</sup>. From the Memo it came out clearly that Foncha was fully committed to secession. He also appeared committed to reunification but he guarded it with so many conditions. Immediate and unconditional reunification was therefore championed by Joseph Innocent Nkamsi and French Cameroonians within the OK. Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the KNC-KPP wanted an autonomous state of the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria. Foncha and the KNDP wanted secession and ultimate reunification while the chief acting in concert wanted a separate and independent Southern Cameroons.

In view of the conflicting programmes of the parties and political leaders, the electorate had to be consulted in one way or another. Dr Emmanuel Endeley proposed that the upcoming January 1959 general elections should decide the issue. However, failing this he accepted a plebiscite which the British had recommended but he insisted that there should be “safeguards to prevent the infiltration of saboteurs from the French sector into our own section in order to influence the referendum in favour of the reunificationists<sup>582</sup>”. The KNC Secretary General S.A. Arrey, made the same appeal as he observed that “the banned UPC and its allied organisations have come out into the open since the advent of the visiting mission”.<sup>583</sup> Endeley and Arrey were therefore aware of the links between the reunificationists in the two territories and possibilities of the reunificationists from French Cameroon influencing plebiscite results in the Southern Cameroons.

The OK unlike its predecessor, the UPC, played a more active role in the reunification debate in the territory because it was allowed greater participation in the territory’s politics. For example, the OK had the opportunity to freely present its petitions to the 1958 UN Visiting Mission. The OK was represented at the Mamfe Plebiscite Conference of August 1959, and in the plebiscite debates at the UN

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid, p.118.

<sup>583</sup> PAB, File Ba/1958/5, UN Visiting Mission: Interviews and Petitions, p.36.

and London. The main reason why the two parties were treated differently may have been due to the fact that the OK was perceived as an indigenous (Southern Cameroons) party. It was this OK participation in the various debates that enabled the reunification idea to survive and to eventually become one of the plebiscite alternatives in 1961. Joseph Innocent Nkamsi and other OK militant from French Cameroon who accepted Ntumazah's leadership should therefore be credited with putting the reunification issue on the political agenda. In this process, Ntumazah served as the vehicle that transported petitions and appeals for reunification from French Cameroonians to the various conferences that debated the future of the Southern Cameroons

### **G. Students with French Cameroon Ancestry and the NUKS**

Although National Union of Kamerun Students was not a political party, its activities were not entirely apolitical. The members especially those with French Cameroon ancestry were interested in the reunification debate that dominated politics in the Southern Cameroons in the 1950s. One of the prominent leaders of NUKS was Boniface T. Nasah. Boniface Nasah was born on July 15, 1934 in Buea by Vincent Nasah and Teresia Mboumda from Bayagam in the Bamileke country in French Cameroon. Vincent Nasah served the British as a soldier during the First World War and took up petit trading in Buea in 1918 when he was demobilized. Boniface Nasah did primary education in Government School Buea and Catholic School Soppo. In 1949 he entered St Joseph's College Sasse and graduated in 1952. He taught in St Joseph's College Sasse in 1953 and studied for the Advanced levels at St Patrick's College Ibadan between 1954 and 1955. In 1956 he was admitted into the University College Ibadan where his lecturers included Dr Gottlieb Monekosso and Dr Anomah Ngu Victor.<sup>584</sup> He later carried out post graduate studies in London and Liverpool Universities. It was this medical student at the head of NUKS who confronted the UN Visiting

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<sup>584</sup> B. T. Nasah, 86years, Retired Medical Doctor,, Buea,,October 27, 2009.

Mission in Ibadan in 1958 and convened the NUKS Reunification Convention in Kumba on July 30, 1959.

Boniface Nasah first came to the limelight as a leader of the student wing of the reunificationists in March 1958. In a memo to the UN which he signed, Nasah and the Southern Cameroons students in Nigeria opposed the ministerial system of government introduced by Endeley in 1958<sup>585</sup>. Nasah and his followers indicated that it was not in the interest of Southern Cameroons to strive to have ministers before the 1959 elections. They accused the British for wanting to use certain personalities in the SCHA to push the territory into integration with Nigeria. They also called on the UN to supervise the 1959 elections in order to prevent irregularities and ensure fair play.<sup>586</sup> The students were therefore of the opinion that a ministerial system of government could only be experimented in the territory after elections following the outcome of the 1957-1958 London Constitutional Conferences.

The Kumba NUKS Convention was organized by Boniface Nasah and sponsored by Joseph Henry Ngu another French Cameroonian businessman in Kumba. The Convention brought together NUKS members from Universities in Nigeria. Prominent amongst them were Boniface T. Nasah who was the Chairman, Thomas Nchinda, Albert Mukong, Nzo Ekahnglaki and others. The students emphasized to the politicians present [Foncha, Endeley and Chief Mukete] that reunification was the best option for the Southern Cameroons<sup>587</sup>.

Prominent speakers at the Convention were the Chairman Nasah, NUKS secretary Albert Mukong and Thomas Nchinda another French Cameroonian medical student. It should be recalled that in 1958 Boniface Nasah addressed a memo to the UN in favour of reunification. According to Boniface Nasah, reunification was to be

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<sup>585</sup>Ibid

<sup>586</sup> Lantum Daniel, 75years, Professor Emeritus of Public Health and Chronicer of Nso' History, Kumbo, Jan. 6. 2009.

<sup>587</sup> Nasah , “ The Role of Students and Student Association in the Political Struggle for Independence and Reunification of Cameroon , in *Cameroon Panorama*, no 539, 2002, pp.5-7.

reparation of what was done to Cameroon in 1916. He indicated that they were worried about the division of the Bamileke and Bangwa. (See portrait of delegates to NUKS Kumba convention in plate 8).

**Plate 7: Nasah Addressing the Kumba 1958 NUKS Convention**



**Source:** Professor Nasah's collection

The pro- reunification campaign took Boniface Nasah and his followers to Yaounde in August 1959. The NUKS delegation was in Yaounde to take part in the Pan- Kamerun Student Union meeting for Reunification and Independence. During the meeting that was officially opened by the Vice Prime Minister of French Cameroon Njine Michel, the students insisted on the restoration of the dignity of Kamerunians and not the Cameroonians. The totality of the cost of the meeting was borne by the Ahmadou Ahidjo Government. This included travel, full board and lodging for all including touristic visits to the Edea factories<sup>588</sup>. Ahmadou Ahidjo certainly wanted these ambassadors of the reunification course from the Southern Cameroons to appreciate the level of economic development in the French Cameroon and the generosity of its leaders. According to Boniface Nasah, it was also an opportunity for them to dialogue with students from French Cameroon who were diehard reunificationists such as Thomas Melone.

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<sup>588</sup> Ibid, no. 540, 2002, p. 11.

## Plate 8 Participants at the NUKS Convention



**Source:** Professor Nasah's collection

**NOTE:** J. H. Ngu (in white on the front roll) and wife (the only lady at the convention) funded the convention and entertained participants

It should be recalled that Ahidjo's attempt to penetrate NUKS and woo its pro- reunification members started in 1958 when he sent his Minister of Finance, Victor Kamga to Nigeria to assure those studying medicine that a health school was to be opened in Yaounde for them to return home and serve their people<sup>589</sup>. This appeal yielded fruits as Dr Gottlieb Monekosso abandoned a lucrative job in Calabar to serve as the first director of the health school in 1969.

Still under the leadership of Boniface Nasah, the second NUKS convention on reunification took place on August 3, 1960 in Victoria.

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<sup>589</sup> Nasah, Retired Medical Doctor, Buea, October 27, 2009.



During the meeting Boniface Nasah and the students continued to hammer on the advantages of reunification. From August 25 to 28,

1960, NUKS organized another Pan- Kamerun Student meeting in Buea. Delegates came from the NUKS Nigeria and *Union Etudiants du Kamerun* from the Republic of Cameroon.

The students were addressed by John Ngu Foncha for the KNDP, Motomby Woleta for the CPNC, Kale for the KUP and G.B. Mbaraga<sup>590</sup> another French Cameroonian, for the OK. Foncha appreciated the students for their support for reunification<sup>591</sup>. NUKS members from French Cameroon or with French Cameroon ancestry like Boniface T. Nasah and Thomas Nchinda therefore used the pressure group as a sub- organ of the reunification parties, the KNDP and OK.

The OK, KNDP and even Ahmadou Ahidjo provided them with scholarships and sponsored their meetings and movements as the reunification debate intensified in the late 1950s. For example, in 1958, the OK gave Boniface Nasah and Albert Mukong air tickets to attend a UN session on emerging nations because these students favoured reunification<sup>592</sup>. Many French Cameroonian students featured on the scholarship lists of Foncha's government in 1959 and 1960. These were indications that students of French Cameroon ancestry were active reunificationists.

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<sup>590</sup> George Belinga Minsi Mbaraga of Yaounde parents was born in April, 1928, at Sasse, Buea. After secondary education, he was employed in Nigeria on April 1, 1950. He passed the civil service examination in 1951 and was trained as a clerk in the Government Clerical Training School Oshogbo Nigeria from September 1951 to June 1952. He moved to Buea where he was transferred to the Commissioner's office as clerk in January 1955. He resigned from his duties in February 1957. He was frustrated as his request to be transferred to the Federal Information Service was rejected and also because he was usually given inadequate leave days to travel to his native Yaounde. In 1957, he joined the UPC and later became a diehard reunificationist under the OK. For more, see, NAB, file OA/b/mba/2, Mbaraga Mr G.B.M. personal papers.

<sup>591</sup>NAB, West Cameroon Press Release January-June 1960, Press Release no.963.

<sup>592</sup> Nasah, Buea, October 27, 2009.

The pro-reunification petitions of the French Cameroonians under the banner of the UPC, OK and NUKS convinced the UN Mission of 1958 that reunification was a popular alternative for the independence of the Southern Cameroons. It should be recalled that the 1949 mission concluded that reunification was not a very popular issue. The 1952 mission still emphasized the unpopularity of reunification. The 1955 mission advised that no hasty decisions should be made concerning the future of the Southern Cameroons. It was the 1958 mission that recognized the popularity of the reunification option and recommended a plebiscite. French Cameroonians had therefore worked hard to popularize the reunification option.

French Cameroonians were therefore militants, supporters or leaders of political parties that worked for the reunification of the two Cameroons. They initially adhered massively to the KNC because Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue made reunification its primary objectives. When Dr Emmanuel Endeley, the KNC parliamentary leader relegated reunification to the background and delayed a motion in parliament for the enfranchisement of French Cameroonians, many immigrants left the KNC for the KNDP.

Within the KNDP, Dr Godfrey G. Dibue and Joseph Simon Epale distinguished themselves as intellectuals of the party who produced pro- reunification pamphlets and articles in the Kamerun times. These intellectuals of French Cameroon origins acting within or without the KNDP think tank (the Kamerun Society) propagated the reunification idea amongst the KNDP cadres and sympathizers. They helped Foncha to establish links with leading reunificationists in French Cameroon and this resulted in moral, material and financial assistance for the KNDP.

UPC's call for immediate independence and immediate reunification and its leadership (all from French Cameroon) attracted more French Cameroon immigrants than the KNDP. With the UPC, these settlers intensified the campaign for reunification. When the UPC was outlawed in May 1957 French Cameroon settlers sponsored the birth of the OK which became the principal reunification movement or party. The OK petitioned the UN visiting mission of

October –November 1958 insisting on the immediate reunification of the two Cameroons. Dr Emmanuel Endeley asked for independence with Nigeria while Foncha like the chiefs talked more of secession. With this division, the UN concluded that a plebiscite was necessary to determine the political destiny of the Southern Cameroons. Although French Cameroonians preferred unilateral action by the UN to effect reunification, they accepted the British and UN proposed plebiscite. If reunification finally featured as one of the plebiscite alternatives, it was thanks to the French Cameroonians who kept the Southern Cameroonians and the UN aware of the possibility of Southern Cameroons independence through reunification with French Cameroon.



## Chapter 6

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### **French Cameroonians and The Plebiscite, 1959-1961**

French Cameroon immigrants, political refugees and political leaders visiting the Southern Cameroons actively participated in and promoted the reunification debate from 1956. As the reunification drive disappeared amongst Southern Cameroonians following constitutional developments in Nigeria, French Cameroonians became diehard reunificationists within the KNDP, UPC and OK<sup>593</sup>.

As the plebiscite approached, British authorities and the integrationists did everything possible to intimidate them and exclude them from the plebiscite. John Ngu Foncha and the KNDP on the other hand, attempted to woo French Cameroonians in and out of the Southern Cameroons so as to benefit from their moral and financial support during the plebiscite campaign. The reunificationists and political leaders in French Cameroon canvassed for reunification in the Southern Cameroons at the eve of the plebiscite. This chapter identifies the plebiscite issue and the methods that were used by Dr Emmanuel Endeley to persecute French Cameroonians sympathetic with the reunification drive and those used by John Ngu Foncha to woo them. It also examines the participation of these people in the plebiscite campaigns and in the voting proper.

#### **A. The Plebiscite Issue**

The most important political issue in the British Southern Cameroons after 1957 was in what form the territory would achieve

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<sup>593</sup> Commissioner Gibbons had predicted in 1951 that much of the drive behind the reunification movement will disappear once Mbile and Endeley had secured elections to the House of Assembly and turned their attention to more practical issues

independence. The issue revolved around Secession, Integration and Reunification. The supporters of secession wanted the Southern Cameroons to become independent as a separate territory without connection with either Nigeria or French Cameroon. This opinion was largely upheld by the chiefs within the SCHC. John Ngu Foncha also talked of secession but he considered secession as a step toward 'ultimate reunification'. However, by 1960, the political leader who championed the cause of an independent Southern Cameroons state was P.M. Kale who founded the Kamerun United Party (KUP) for this purpose.

The integrationists were those who wanted the Southern Cameroons to gain independence as a state within the federation of Nigeria. Nerius Mbile and Dr Emmanuel Endeley were amongst the supporters of this option. Mbile's KPP and Endeley's KNC were merged in 1960 to form the Cameroons People's National Congress (CPNC) to serve as propaganda machinery in favour of integration with Nigeria.

The supporters of Reunification wanted the Southern Cameroons to gain independence by joining their 'brothers' in French Cameroon. French Cameroonians were outspoken promoters of this option. Amongst them were; Joseph Henry Ngu, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, Roland Moumie, Joseph Innocent Kamsi and George Mbaraga. These reunificationists were either militants of the KNDP or those of the UPC/OK.

The division between the Southern Cameroons political elite was first manifested in March 1957 when general elections were held in the territory. Endeley's KNC campaigned on the platform of "full and autonomous self-government" for the Southern Cameroons within Nigeria and promised to maintain "useful contacts with the indigenous population of French Cameroon". The KNDP campaigned for the secession of the Southern Cameroons from Nigeria and for ultimate reunification with French Cameroon. The French Cameroonian dominated UPC campaigned on a platform that called for the immediate independence and immediate reunification of the two Cameroons.

When the election results were declared, the ruling KNC party won six seats, the KNDP won five and the KPP won two seats. The UPC had no seat. The results indicated that the electorate was divided because no party or ideology obtained an absolute majority in the SCHA.

However it was clear that the idea of immediate reunification supported by French Cameroonians and the UPCists was not popular amongst the Southern Cameroons electorate.

The elections were immediately followed by a constitutional conference in London from May 23 to June 26, 1957. The constitutional changes for the Southern Cameroons were more in favour of the integrationists than it was for any other group. Southern Cameroons became a fully autonomous, not self-governing, region within Nigeria. Endeley the Premier went ahead to introduce a ministerial system of government despite opposition from the KNDP, NUKS and SCHC.

When the conference resumed on September 29, 1958 the parties were still divided on the form the territory would achieve independence. The KNC-KPP alliance wanted independence within Nigeria while the KNDP demanded secession but not reunification. The French Cameroonian dominated OK could not sit at such a conference table to discuss Cameroon affairs with Anglo-Nigerian imperialists. This division persisted by the time the fourth, final and most important UN Mission was to arrive Cameroon in October 29, 1958. The team met the various leaders of the Southern Cameroons who outlined their programmes, and suggested what ought to be done and how.

The KNC-KPP with Endeley as leader stood for integration or rather association with Nigeria. They wanted to see the issues resolved by the 1959 general elections. The OK led by Joseph Innocent Kamsi stood for reunification and felt that the UN should unilaterally reunite Cameroon. The chiefs stood for secession and demanded a plebiscite to settle the issues. Foncha's KNDP stood for a fusion of secession and reunification with more emphasis on the secession option. The KNDP preferred that public opinion be used as a means of consulting with the Southern Cameroons.

On January 24, 1959, general elections were organised in the Southern Cameroons. The KNDP-OK alliance campaigned for reunification and obtained fourteen seats while the KNC-KPP alliance had twelve seats in the SCHA. The 1959 elections therefore failed to divide the protagonists as both the reunificationists and the integrationists failed each to obtain an absolute majority within the SCHA. Worse-till in March 1960, Boja a KNDP deputy from the Wum constituency crossed the carpet and joined the KNC. The SCHA became divided into two equal camps of thirteen reunificationists and thirteen integrationists. Given this scenario, a plebiscite became inevitable. Also both parties had started manoeuvres in preparation for a possible plebiscite as far back as 1957.

## **B. Endeley's Intimidation and Persecution of French Cameroonians**

The conduct of the Southern Cameroons plebiscite was characterized by suspicion, accusation and the abuse of power by the organizers and administrative authorities. French Cameroonians who had no authority, or position in government but who were an interested party in the plebiscite, were the principal victims of the abuse of power by the various authorities. Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the integrationists who were in power since 1954 used their position or authority to intimidate or persecute French Cameroonians who supported reunification before the plebiscite was even announced. The British colonial authorities classified the bid for reunification under revolutionary politics and anti-British activities. As expected, the proponents came under heavy intelligence surveillance, and were to be combated and extirpated in the same way as the UPCists in French Cameroon.

Between 1954 and 1959, the Endeley Government gradually resorted to hostile policies against stranger elements and especially French Cameroonians in Victoria Division. Houses built by strangers were sorted out and numbered serially. Each code number was



assigned a specific tax. Dr Emmanuel Endeley equally went further to resist immigrant membership in certain local organizations or institutions such as the Bakweri Co-operative Union of Farmers and the Victoria councils and native courts.<sup>594</sup> Dr Emmanuel Endeley personally headed the portfolios in charge of local governance like co-operatives and councils. Moreover he was the President of the Bakweri Co-operative Union of Farmers and as former Secretary and President of the CDC Workers Union; he was better placed to integrate plantation and stranger concerns in the emerging local government system. This was not the case because he could benefit from the exclusion of French Cameroonians from the politics of the Division. He took steps to increase the gap between the indigenes and the settlers and to exclude all the settlers from local institutions and associations.

On June 3, 1956, the authorities confiscated a large amount of money from UPC refugees in the Southern Cameroons. On August 4, 1956, Roland Moumie's UPC offices in Bamenda were destroyed by fire at 10:30pm. The fire broke out on the day Roland Moumie and Abel Kingue addressed a public meeting in Bamenda. At the time of the fire, Moumie and Kingue were attending a nearby dance. Two refugee members of the UPC who were sleeping in the house then managed to escape<sup>595</sup>. On December 12, 1956 UPC offices in Santa suffered the same fate<sup>596</sup>.

The confiscation of the funds was carried out by Endeley's officials who feared that such funds and materials could be used to propagate the idea of reunification. Even though those involved in the fire incidents were never actually known, it is clear that the culprits were Southern Cameroonians who did not cherish the political activities of the UPC refugees in favour of reunification. The fire incident was intended to remind the Southern Cameroonians about the terrorism and UPC- provoked chaos in the French Cameroon.

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<sup>594</sup> Monono, *Indigenous Minorities and the Future of Good Governance*, p.42.

<sup>595</sup> NAB file Vb/b1957/3, The Union of the Populations of Cameroon, p. 62.

<sup>596</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 258.

On the eve of the March 15, 1957 elections, Dr Emmanuel Endeley insisted that French Cameroonians could only participate or vote if they had been resident in the Southern Cameroons for a continuous period of 10 years and must have paid tax in the Southern Cameroons for the 10 years. In the Muyuka registration area which harboured some strangers from the French Cameroon, the presentation of ten tax tickets held many people back from registering<sup>597</sup>. In Victoria Division, qualified French Cameroonians were victims of registration irregularities. In a letter to the District Officer for Victoria, Roland Moumie indicated that the names of French Cameroonians written in the list and the register differed somewhat from those appearing in the identification papers. This wrong or poor spelling of names of French Cameroonians was a strategy by Endeley's government to prevent them from voting on March 15, 1957<sup>598</sup>.

It should be noted that the UPC supported by French Cameroonians failed to win a single seat in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly in 1957 and blamed Dr Emmanuel Endeley for rigging the elections. Roland Moumie even threatened taking the KNC government to court for rigging the elections. Dr Emmanuel Endeley wanted to frustrate these French Cameroonians and push them out of the politics of the territory. The legislative election results of that year comforted Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the KNC as the party obtained a relative majority in the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly with six seats as against five for the KNDP and two for the KPP. This was the opportunity for Endeley to further sanction his opponents from French Cameroon.

On May 30, 1957, the Governor-General of Nigeria at the instigation of Endeley declared the UPC illegal in the Southern Cameroons. Its leaders were jailed in Buea and Endeley even attempted to hand them over to Ahidjo. Deportation Orders were later issued against 13 of their leaders including Roland Moumie.

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<sup>597</sup> NAB, file Valc (1956) 9, Southern Cameroons House of Assembly Elections, 1956/57, p. 311.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

Only UPC members from French Cameroon were deported<sup>599</sup>. They were jailed in Lagos for eight days before they were sent to Egypt. The authorities also confiscated their funds and property. UPC literature, meetings, parades, propaganda and other manifestations were banned in the Southern Cameroons. Other French Cameroonians became victims of police harassment and intimidation. Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the British authorities therefore wanted to intimidate French Cameroonians and discredit the reunification movement.

With the UPC dissolved and its leaders deported, its supporters were constantly harassed, arrested and detained. Some of the French Cameroonians arrested in the Southern Cameroons were finally executed by the French in French Cameroon. Policemen moved into villages and towns without wearing police uniforms and acted as ‘agent provocateurs’ in order to identify the enemies of the government (the reunificationists from French Cameroon). Once identified, they were arrested. This was how on October 2, 1958, Nigerian police raided Fiango, Kumba and arrested six prohibited immigrants and escorted them to the French Cameroon borders. This was how Noubi Janvier, the financial secretary of the OK was arrested in Kumba by Franco-British police on October 4, 1958. This was how Tenguia Richard was arrested in December 1958, in his Tombel shelter where he was avoiding the French<sup>600</sup>. This was how Isaac Tchoupé and Pierre Simo were also arrested. These arrests were followed by repatriation to French Cameroon. There, Pierre Simo was executed on June 10, 1959 and Isaac Tchaoupé on August 14, 1959<sup>601</sup>. Many French Cameroonians including Kamto Donald, Kamdem Justin, Marcus Mondji, James Pega and Jean Djomo who had sought asylum or who were immigrants in the Southern Cameroons perished in a similar way<sup>602</sup>.

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<sup>599</sup> Ndeh Chi Simon, 65years, Ntumazah’s collaborator, Bamenda, March 10,2010

<sup>600</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, P. 259.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid, p. 260

The British explained their action of sending people to their death in French Cameroon in legal terms. Kamto Donald was arrested on March 2, 1958 for the unauthorized carriage of private mails in contravention of section 176 of the criminal code. Kamdem Justin was arrested on the same day for being in possession of poisonous drugs in contravention of section 59 of the pharmacy ordinance<sup>603</sup>. Others were imprisoned for criminal offences and amongst them were twenty-seven French Cameroonians convicted for unlawful possession of dangerous weapons<sup>604</sup>.

The rest who were repatriated were prohibited immigrants who had entered the Southern Cameroons illegally. Marcus Mondy and James Pega were arrested in Santa on December 13, 1958, detained and given two weeks and all necessary facilities to make their own arrangements to leave the Southern Cameroons. After that they would be placed on the first convenient ship, aircraft, motor or other vehicle to leave the Southern Cameroons<sup>605</sup>.

On the eve of the UN visit to the territory in 1958, many French Cameroonians were also deported from Bamenda. They included David Tiso, Joseph Fotso Clement Totap and Benjamin Tupi<sup>606</sup>. It is certain that Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the British authorities did not want these “strangers” to confront the UN Visiting Mission with petitions in favour of reunification, although the British gave the impression that these were unwanted criminals.

Under the Aliens Deportation Ordinance the Governor-General of Nigeria could make a deportation order against such aliens if he deemed it to be conducive to public good. Between November and December 1959, Joseph Tekam, Daniel Nouwou and Aloysius Nkamdem were deported<sup>607</sup>. They were arrested and escorted to the frontier on the same day and warned not to return. When they arrived in French Cameroon, they were arrested by the administration

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<sup>603</sup> Ibid

<sup>604</sup> NAB, File Vb/b 1960/5 Repatriations, p.5

<sup>605</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 260.

<sup>606</sup> Nchinda Andreas, 88years, Trader, Bamenda, January 12, 2009.

<sup>607</sup> Nzume, “British and French Administration of Peoples”, p.173.

and imprisoned<sup>608</sup>. If it was by accident that all these ‘criminals’ were reunificationists or supporters of the UPC and OK from French Cameroon, then accidents in the Southern Cameroons of the time had a special logic of their own.

French Cameroonians were also harassed through over-taxation, seizure of funds or wealth and arrests on the grounds that they belong to illegal organizations. These harassments led sometimes to requests for voluntary repatriation. For example on May 25, 1960 some 39 persons requested to be repatriated to Bafoussam while 36 others wished to be repatriated to Mombo in French Cameroon<sup>609</sup>. The British however gave explanations to some, not all of these harassments. Jean Djomo Treasurer of the OK was arrested and the funds he had with him seized, because he transgressed some specific provision of the law and not because of his membership of the OK Party which was not an illegal organization. He was charged with being a member of an unlawful society (the proscribed UPC)<sup>610</sup>. Epeyé Bulu Yoko was originally assessed the flat tax rate of 1.105 Pounds Later on, because he did not give particulars about his income, he was assessed 6.11 Pounds on an income of 320 Pounds per year<sup>611</sup>. Alphonse Njomo was originally assessed 2.5 Pounds on an income of 120 Pounds per year. Later, this was changed to 5.16 Pounds on an income of 310 Pounds per year. Bufok Ofan John was assessed to pay 2.5 Pounds on an income of 120 Pounds per year and he lodged no appeal. These were all French Cameroonians and workers in the OK offices<sup>612</sup>. These harassments and high taxes were attempts by the British and Endeley’s Government to frustrate these supporters of reunification.

Dr Emmanuel Endeley also used his powers to intimidate French Cameroonians at the eve of each election. On February 15, 1957, and at the eve of the March 1957 elections, Dr Emmanuel Endeley instigated British troops to invade and search UPC offices in the

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<sup>608</sup>Ibid, p.175.

<sup>609</sup> NAB, file Vb/b 1960/5, Repatriations, p. 1.

<sup>610</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 262.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid.

Southern Cameroons. The aim was to intimidate UPC militants although the British later explained that the search was carried out because the police believed that a number of typewriters reported stolen from French Cameroon might be found in the offices of the UPC in the Southern Cameroons<sup>613</sup>. During the search, no typewriters were found, but prohibited literature and a number of documents in French, were removed for examination. This was intimidation at the eve of an important election.

French Cameroonians also wrote applications for statutory declarations to qualify for registration on the voters list in 1957. They had to justify their long stay in the Southern Cameroons and tax payment<sup>614</sup>. In February 1958, Nerus Namaso Mbile and Motomby – Woleta (KNC barons) called for the disfranchisement of French Cameroonians before elections into the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly in 1959<sup>615</sup>. A. Ngassa, a French Cameroonian reacted to this statement in the Daily Times of February 7, 1958 indicating that French Cameroonians tax-payers had the right to vote<sup>616</sup>. Ngassa like many others was ready to protest attempts to disenfranchise immigrants from French Cameroon who were regularly paying their taxes.

As the January 24, 1959 general elections drew nearer, the integrationists and the British continued to discriminate about the voter qualification for those elections. Nigerians with only two years residence in the Southern Cameroons registered and voted with ease; but on the other hand, French Cameroonians had to be in the region continuously for ten years and produce tax tickets to that effect before being allowed to vote<sup>617</sup>. Even when they satisfied these requirements, it was alleged, registration forms were always exhausted when they were around and available when Nigerians came<sup>618</sup>. All

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<sup>613</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

<sup>614</sup> PAB, file NW/va/a1957/1, Statutory Declaration of French Cameroonians as voters in the Southern Cameroon elections, 1957, p .3

<sup>615</sup> NAB; file Vb/b/1959/1, K P P, p.52.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

<sup>617</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 263.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

these discriminatory practices were intended to frustrate French Cameroonians who were ready to vote in favour of the KNDP-OK reunificationist alliance in 1959.

British attempts to frustrate French Cameroonians were not limited to harassments, repatriations, arrests and discrimination in voter's registration. The British refused to make observations on petitions originating from French Cameroonians especially after May 30, 1957 when the UPC and its associate organizations were declared illegal. For example, the British refused to comment on a petition written by Ngambus William Vice President of the Cameroons Democratic Youth, Kumba branch in 1958 on the rationale that the Cameroons Democratic Youth was an illegal organization with which the British could not deal<sup>619</sup>. The British also refused to issue a passport to Roland Moumie to travel to the UN several times. They argued that Roland Moumie was denied passports because he was not a British subject or a British protected person<sup>620</sup>. In reality the British did not want these French Cameroonians to go and convince the UN that reunification was a popular option in the Southern Cameroons. It should be mentioned here that when French Cameroonians UPC leaders realized that they lacked an audience in the Southern Cameroons due to measures put to place by Dr Emmanuel Endeley, they turned to the UN and inundated the organization with pro-reunification petitions between 1957 and 1959.

Even when Moumie's UPC was transformed into the OK, its leader Ndeh Ntumazah suffered the same problem. He was often denied a passport to travel to the UN. When given, he was usually delayed in such a way as to make the journey useless. Again, when given he had very unreasonable conditions such as requiring him to deposit his passport with the government in Lagos, Nigeria and to start all over again when he wanted to travel next time<sup>621</sup>. Contacts between the UN and French Cameroonians who were militants of

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid, p. 259.

<sup>620</sup> Ndifor Clement, 83 years, retired Trader, Santa, May 26, 2009.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid, p. 260.

OK were also made difficult in 1958 when a UN team arrived in the territory.

If movements to the UN were made difficult for French Cameroonians, there were also attempts to restrict traffic on the French Cameroon road system. For example, on January 14, 1958, J.O. Fields issued instructions forbidding all nocturnal movements along the roads and paths in the Bamileke Region of the French Cameroons between the hours of 7pm and 5.30pm. He also directed that traffic between Bafang and the bridge at Nkam will only be permitted between the hours of 5.30am and 6.30 am, 12noon and 2pm and between 5.30pm and 7pm<sup>622</sup>. Although this measure was introduced to protect Southern Cameroonians from the havoc of UPC radical nationalism, it limited the contact between the reunificationists in the two Cameroons.

Dr Emmanuel Endeley also used patronage and bribery to frustrate French Cameroonians. For example, the Constitution of the Southern Cameroons provided that special members would be appointed to represent interests otherwise not represented in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. One of such appointees was to be a woman representative. Despite persistent petitions from women of French Cameroon origins in Victoria to be accorded such special representation in parliament, Dr Emmanuel Endeley instead recommended the appointment of Dorcas Ekowole Idowu to represent the Women in 1957<sup>623</sup>. Idowu was a Southern Cameroonian born in 1903 and was married to a Nigerian in 1919. The Southern Kamerun Women's Organization, a rejuvenation of the dissolved UPC Women affiliate petitioned the appointment. Certainly Dr Emmanuel Endeley knew that Dorcas Ekowole, leader of the Victoria Branch of the KNC Women's section, could vote in favour of integration with Nigeria in parliament<sup>624</sup>. He was quite sure that a woman from the Southern Kamerun Women's Organization could

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<sup>622</sup> PAB, file NW/sa/d 1957/1, Southern Cameroons Monthly News Bulletin, p.13.

<sup>623</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites". p. 262.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid, p.263.



not support integration with Nigeria given its links with the UPC and its domination by French Cameroonians.

Dr Emmanuel Endeley also used patronage to divide French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons. Through him, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was able to become a member of the Nigeria Produce Marketing Board and later Chairman of the Southern Cameroon Development Agency (SCDA)<sup>625</sup>. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue became satisfied as Chairman of the SCDA and president of the KNC, the political party in power that he relegated reunification to the background. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was even the first in the Southern Cameroons to accuse the UPC refugees in the Southern Cameroons of being communists<sup>626</sup>. He became a supporter of the call for the creation of a separate regional status for the Southern Cameroons in association with the Federation of Nigeria.

In a letter to Dr Emmanuel Endeley on February 29, 1960, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue disclosed that he was able to convince the Nigerian authorities especially chief Festus Ekotie- Eboh Federal Minister of Finance to provide the integrationists with propaganda vehicles, funds and a team of propaganda experts for the plebiscite campaign<sup>627</sup>. He also called on Nerius Namaso Mbile, Motomby – Woleta and Dr Emmanuel Endeley to sink their personal differences or misunderstanding for the sake of the best interest of the Cameroons peoples, that is, for the sake of integration with Nigeria<sup>628</sup>. This letter reached John Ngu Foncha who raise an alarm in the House of Assembly accusing the opposition of plans to sell Cameroon to Nigeria<sup>629</sup>. Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue therefore became a diehard integrationist who lobbied for campaign funds from Nigeria thanks to Endeley's use of patronage. Unfortunately for the integrationists, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue did not “cross-the-

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<sup>625</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 73.

<sup>626</sup> NAB, file Vb/b/1957/3, UPC, p.45.

<sup>627</sup> NAB, file vb/b/1960/5, Office of the Prime Minister, p.2.

<sup>628</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p.137.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid, p.132.

carpet” with many French Cameroonians as Endeley had expected probably because Foncha worked hard to woo them.

According to several petitions addressed by French Cameroonians to the UN, the British also excluded them from the plebiscite by employing only people with integrationist sympathies as registration clerks. These clerks then did everything possible to register or give the vote to as few secessionists and reunificationists as possible. One of the ways of doing this was to continue pretending, when the undesirable came around, that registration forms were not available.<sup>630</sup> When the British were questioned in the Trusteeship Council about the charge, they argued that the majority of the registration clerks were Cameroonians except in a few cases, where there were large numbers of non-Cameroonians resident, when persons of Nigerian descent resident in the Southern Cameroons were appointed. This was the case in the Misselele registration district and other districts.<sup>631</sup> Even though there was a shortage of trained Southern Cameroonians, the British policy was to get the Southern Cameroons integrated with Nigeria and this was possible with the use of Nigerian registration clerks.

Another method used by the British to intimidate French Cameroonians at the eve of the plebiscite was the appointment of British expatriates, administrators and missionaries, all of whom, it was alleged had integrationist sympathies, to supervise registration of voters for the plebiscite. On September 15, 1960, Joseph Innocent Nkamsi of the OK protested against this practice. The Enlightenment Officers whom the British also recruited from Nigeria and Britain to help instruct the Cameroonians on the political implications of the plebiscite questions were also there to intimidate the reunificationists.

As if this was not enough, the British dispatched a contingent of soldiers to the territory in July 1960 to police the polls. On August

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<sup>630</sup> Mrs Ngo Pegba Poke Monica who was born in 1920 and who was an influential member of the SOLIBABI in Tiko petitioned the UN on this practice in 1960.

<sup>631</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p.264.

22, 1960, George Belinga Mbaraga requested that the UN police force rather than the British army should be stationed in Cameroon during the plebiscite if there was any need for it.<sup>632</sup> In fact the use of British officials in the Southern Cameroons during this crucial moment was a clear indication that the British wanted to bias the polls by intimidating all the opponents of integration especially the French Cameroon electorate.

### **C. Foncha Woos French Cameroonians**

If Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the British authorities intimidated and persecuted French Cameroonians in order to procure a pro-Nigerian vote in case of a plebiscite, Foncha wooed French Cameroonians in order to guarantee a vote in favour of reunification. As a convinced reunificationist, Foncha bolted away from the KNC in 1955 and founded the KNDP when Dr Emmanuel Endeley began to relegate reunification to the background. In a fourteen-point memorandum, Foncha's KNDP, in its seventh point, pronounced its support for the reunification between British Cameroon and French Cameroon. The KNDP expressed its political platform on March 1, 1956 in a petition to the Secretary General of the UN in which it emphasized that Cameroonians wanted nothing but the reunification of all sections of the Cameroons. In all the conferences, which were convened between 1956 and 1961 to negotiate Southern Cameroons political future, John Ngu Foncha always preached secession from Nigeria and its ultimate reunification with French Cameroon<sup>633</sup>.

Dr John Ngu Foncha knew that secession alone was the most popular political option in the Southern Cameroons followed by association with Nigeria, while reunification with French Cameroon was only popular amongst the French Cameroon immigrants<sup>634</sup>. A great majority of the KNDP officials also wanted secession without

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<sup>632</sup> Ibid, p.266.

<sup>633</sup> Ngoh, "John Ngu Foncha and the Reunification Saga," p. 341.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid, p. 342.

reunification<sup>635</sup>. As a convinced reunificationist, Foncha therefore had to collaborate with French Cameroonians within and without the Southern Cameroons in order to achieve his cherished dream.

In a confidential letter to Paul Soppo Priso on October 30, 1956 requesting for financial assistance, Foncha went on to outline his programme for reunification in five steps;

- a) Separation from Nigeria in order to have direct dealing with the British Government as the Administering Authority;
- b) Autonomous legislative House in the Southern Cameroons;
- c) Direct negotiations for reunification with the Administering Authority and the UN;
- d) Reunification
- e) Independence<sup>636</sup>.

Foncha's programme as communicated to Paul Soppo Priso indicated that reunification would be achieved before independence. Southern Cameroonians were unaware of this Foncha's hidden agenda and it was probably exposed to Paul Soppo Priso to woo him to finance the reunification campaign.

Besides, John Ngu Foncha also succeeded to develop some important contacts with the reunificationists in French Cameroon in 1958 when he created a branch of the KNDP in Douala and also associated himself with the committee for the reunification of the Cameroon, which was based in Douala<sup>637</sup>. In May 1958 he travelled by taxi, camion and bus through the Bamileke, Mungo and Douala District in French Cameroon talking and drinking palm wine with the simple people<sup>638</sup>. During this trip he met with Soppo Priso and Douala Yondo who accepted to patronize the reunification effort<sup>639</sup>.

After the third general elections in the Southern Cameroons in January 1959, the new Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha started a tour of the Southern Cameroons on April 10, 1959. John Ngu Foncha included in his tour, certain towns of French Cameroon such

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<sup>635</sup> Kale, *Political Evolution in the Cameroons*, p. 69.

<sup>636</sup> NAB, file A/c 4/L591/Rev: UN General Assembly, p.11..

<sup>637</sup> Ibid

<sup>638</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 132.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid, p. 133

as Loum, Nkongsamba, Dschang and Mbounda<sup>640</sup>. From Buea, John Ngu Foncha went through Kumba to Loum where he was warmly received by Njine Michel, Deputy Premier and Minister of Education of the first Ahmadou Ahidjo's Government in French Cameroon. From Loum, Foncha moved to Nkongsamba where he inspected a police guard of honour and addressed a large crowd declaring that Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon could now be regarded as one<sup>641</sup>.

The same evening he and his colleagues attended a cocktail party at the home of the District Officer, Nkongsamba where they met representatives from all parts of the French Cameroon. At this party the Premier expressed the view that the KNDP had won the 1959 elections with God's help and re-affirmed his party's intention to fight against black imperialism and for the early liberation of all Cameroonians.<sup>642</sup> In Nkongsamba he also held talks with Paul Monthe an economic counsellor. Foncha discussed his concept of Federation with him.

From Nkongsamba, Foncha travelled to Dschang where he inspected another guard of honour. From Dschang he travelled to Mbouda and Santa before arriving Bamenda. At Santa he was met by numerous chiefs from Bamenda and French Cameroon including the Chief of Dschang and the Sultan of Foumban. While in Bamenda, he held a mammoth reception for the sultan of Foumban Seidou Njoya Njimouluh, the Mayor of Douala, Rudolf Tokoto, the Mayor of Nkongsamba and a retinue of about 200<sup>643</sup>. The Bamenda reception ended with a dance in the Bamenda Community Hall during which the French Cameroon Community presented him with a portrait of himself in native attire<sup>644</sup>. These dignitaries from French Cameroon

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<sup>640</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.71.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>642</sup> PAB, file NW/sa/d 1957/1, Southern Cameroons Monthly News Bulletin, p.174.

<sup>643</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 133.

<sup>644</sup> PAB, file NW/sa/d 1957/1, Southern Cameroons Monthly News Bulletin, p.174.

left Bamenda convinced that it was nice meeting their brothers of the Southern Cameroons and more so reuniting the two territories.

The Bamenda reception was followed by a three-day visit from Foncha to Prime Minister Ahmadou Ahidjo in Yaounde. John Ngu Foncha arrived the Yaounde airport on Friday May 8, 1959 and was given a heroic welcome by a crowd of people including the Prime Minister Ahmadou Ahidjo, the High Commissioner Xavier Torre, the Mayor of Yaounde, Andre Fouda, the speaker of the House of Assembly, Prince Daniel Kemajou, all the cabinet ministers and the British Consul in Yaounde<sup>645</sup>. He inspected a guard of honour mounted by the French Cameroon police and army. This was the first time Foncha was given such honours out of the Southern Cameroons. Such honours were certainly intended to woo him to continue the struggle for reunification.

On the second day of the visit on Saturday May 9, John Ngu Foncha wooed by the quality of the reception, declared that secession was foremost in the minds of his people and that reunification would come with secession from Nigeria. On Sunday May 10, he was presented with the medal of the *commandeur de l'ordre de la valeur Camerounaise*. This was the highest order in the French Cameroon and Foncha was the first foreigner to receive such an order<sup>646</sup>. Foncha's first official contact with the Yaounde authorities was therefore quite cordial and they saw the need to sponsor the reunification campaign in the Southern Cameroons.

It should be noted that Foncha's entourage during the April – May 1959 visit to French Cameroon included the following ministers and top ranking personalities of the KNDP party. Solomon Tandeng Muna, Minister of Work and Transport and Mrs. Muna; Augustine Ngom Jua, Minister of Social Services, P. Kemcha Minister of Natural Resources, Ndoke Minister of State, J.M Bokwe, KNDP member of Kumba South East, D.M Frambo KNDP member for Mamfe South and W.N.O Effiom KNDP Member for Mamfe

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<sup>645</sup>NAB, West Cameroon Press Release no. 342, May 13, 1959.

<sup>646</sup>Ibid.

West<sup>647</sup>. These tours, contacts and the composition of the delegation convinced the ordinary people and political leaders in French Cameroon that the reunification movement was strong in the Southern Cameroons and needed their support.

Apart from these public contacts, Foncha had regular private meeting with traditional authorities in French Cameroon like the Sultan of Foumban and the kings of Douala. These meetings and visits to French Cameroon by Southern Cameroons dignitaries of the government party (KNDP), where they were treated to lavish receptions, did much to create a sense of an "El Dorado" in their cause<sup>648</sup>. Nerius Namaso Mbile of the KNC/ KPP alliance which wanted the Southern Cameroons to gain independence within Nigeria rightly observed that KNDP frequent trips to Yaounde, Douala, Bafoussam or Foumban, were to collect aid in cash and kind for the reunification cause<sup>649</sup>. According to him, John Ngu Foncha, the reunificationists and KNDP leader received enormous assistance in money and material from all types of well-wishers and supporters east of the Mungo<sup>650</sup>.

Apart from official visits to French Cameroon, John Ngu Foncha dispatched Sam Mofor to Dschang, Mbouda, Bafang, Nkongsamba, Mbanga and Douala on several occasions to take part in fund-raising campaigns in favour of the KNDP at the eve of the plebiscite<sup>651</sup>. During these fund-raising campaigns, wealthy Bamileke businessmen donated generously to help the KNDP ensure a victory for reunification during the plebiscite. Sam Mofor was among the few courageous Southern Cameroonians to tour the Bamileke regions in 1960 and 1961 when UPC terrorism was at its peak. In a speech in

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<sup>647</sup> Soh,, *Dr John Ngu Foncha* p. 72.

<sup>648</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political story*, p. 121.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Atem George, retired historian who participated in the plebiscite, Buea, January 24, 2010. Atem indicated that Sam mofor sometimes went out without Foncha's authorization and it seems he did not surrender all the funds collected to the party hierarchy.

Dschang on June 23, 1963, John Ngu Foncha paid tribute to Sam Mofor for his courage during the campaigns. He said;

I should not fail to pay my gratitude to Honourable Sam Moffor who was the only man at that time who braved danger and moved freely through the Bamileke region in order to enlist your sympathy and collect the funds you kindly donated to our cause for the plebiscite.<sup>652</sup>

This declaration confirms the view that significant sums of money were raised by the Bamileke community at the eve of the plebiscite. According to Atem who took part in the KNDP campaigns in Mamfe Division and parts of the Bamileke plateau, the Land Rover that was used by the campaign team was provided by Joseph Henry Ngu another French Cameroonian resident in (Kumba) the Southern Cameroons.

John Ngu Foncha also made significant efforts to encourage French Cameroonian reunificationists in the Southern Cameroons not to relent their efforts in the struggle for reunification

He started by integrating French Cameroonians into Native Authority institutions like courts and councils especially in the Victoria Division where Endeley's government had denied them such opportunities. The most outstanding decision was the appointment of Paul Sinju (Paul Bamileke) at the head of the Tiko Municipality in 1959. This was a progressive Bamileke man who had contributed to the economic development of the town. His appointment was seen as an open door policy towards settlers long rejected by the previous government.

In his Cameroonisation of the Southern Cameroons civil service and private sector companies in 1959, people of French Cameroon origins were never discriminated against. They were given the same employment opportunities like their brothers from the Southern

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<sup>652</sup> NAB, file no. va/el1963/4, Visit by Head of State, Correspondence Concerning, 1963, p.5



Cameroons and had the same career profile<sup>653</sup>. These newly promoted 'big guns' became active supporters of reunification if they were not already that. More importantly, however, since employment and promotion of junior workers in their respective departments were sometimes in their hand, it was alleged, they made sure these went to those who agreed to promote reunification morally and financially<sup>654</sup>.

Foncha's entourage also included French Cameroonians such as Simon Azu Njosa. Simon Azu Njosa who was born in Dschang on September 27, 1932, was a reporter with the Southern Cameroons information service. Many French Cameroonians such as Jacob Ngu, Simon Azu Njosa and others were given scholarships to study abroad and return to serve as cadres in the administration<sup>655</sup>. On the contrary, French Cameroonians who were vocal critics of reunification lost their jobs. For example, on July 10, 1959, John Ngu Foncha appointed William Patrick Lebaka to replace Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue as manager of the SCDA<sup>656</sup>. The dismissal of Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue was not unconnected to his anti-reunification stance.

Another group of French Cameroonians John Ngu Foncha had to woo were those branded as UPC guerrilla fighters. These political refugees needed Foncha's protection against Ahmadou Ahidjo and this was constantly promised. For example, on March 2, 1960, Foncha granted audience to the French Cameroon guerrilla fighters in Kumba led by Mr. Njinta. The refugees requested John Ngu Foncha to use his good office to contact Ahmadou Ahidjo and plead for a total and an unconditional amnesty for the radical nationalists<sup>657</sup>. In his reply, Foncha said that he was in sympathy with Njinta's demand for total amnesty and promised to serve as an arbitrator

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<sup>653</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 98.

<sup>654</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 268.

<sup>655</sup> Jacob Ngu son of the reunificationist J. H. Ngu trained as a medical doctor in London while Njosa studied journalism in London for one year. All of them were of Dschang Ancestry.

<sup>656</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 104.

<sup>657</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release January to June 1960, no 689, p. 122.

between the refugees and Ahidjo. Foncha told the refugees that guerrilla warfare in the Republic of Cameroon would not deter his Government from pushing ahead with plans for reunification to which it was dedicated. These contacts between Foncha and the refugees were frequent and this enabled this category of French Cameroonians to influence the reunification process.

Although Foncha attempted to woo the unarmed UPC refugees, he also placated Ahidjo by persecuting UPC refugees guilty of continuous attacks on French Cameroon. This policy was intensified after November 21, 1958 when an armed group attacked a group of “*gardes Camerounais*” at Forkana Loum about 500meters from the frontier with British Cameroon killing two and wounding four<sup>658</sup>. Following the incident, the French Consul General in Lagos and Ahmadou Ahidjo called for greater collaboration against the guerrilla fighters. When John Ngu Foncha became Prime Minister in 1959, he wooed Ahmadou Ahidjo by initiating several moves against these radical nationalists. For example, in February 1961, Zami Daniel, Joseph Wambo, Nyuteneze Andres, Kanga Sylvester, Jekhu Jacob and Kwangam Pierre were found guilty in the high court in Buea of possession of arms, ammunitions and UPC documents and were sentenced to two years imprisonment.<sup>659</sup> These political and judicial anti-UPC measures were many between 1959 and 1961 as Foncha attempted to win Ahidjo’s sympathy.

In November 1959, John Ngu Foncha decided to make more overtures toward the French-speaking “brothers”. He decided to uplift the contacts with French Cameroon officials to a more formal ministerial level when on November 25, 1959, he sent his minister of Works and Transport, Solomon Tandeng Muna and H. L.M Butchner, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Transport, on a visit to Douala and Yaounde<sup>660</sup>. During the visit, Solomon Tandeng Muna had talks with Premier Ahmadou Ahidjo,

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<sup>658</sup> PRO, CO554/1765, file.WAF 38/3/08, Activities of the UPC in the British Cameroons, p.3.

<sup>659</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release no.1209, February 6, 1961.

<sup>660</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no.689, p. 105.

the minister of works and the minister of Natural Resources. The talks were centred on convincing Ahmadou Ahidjo to assist Foncha's reunification movement. Ahmadou Ahidjo accepted to provide financial assistance for the campaigns and to study possibilities of funding the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road.

On December 31, 1959, John Ngu Foncha led a powerful eleven-man delegation to participate at the independence celebration of the Republic of Cameroon on January 1, 1960. Foncha's delegation included a diehard reunificationist of French Cameroun origins Joseph Henry Ngu who led the FCWU and KUNC in Kumba for Years<sup>661</sup>. John Ngu Foncha's presence in Yaounde on the Independence Day celebrations was also significant because in his speech, he declared his determination to work hard to achieve reunification. Unfortunately for the reunificationists who attended the celebrations, Ahidjo's Independence Day speech did not allude to the possible reunification of the two Cameroons. It might have been because of the many problems on his table notably guerrilla warfare that was escalating in the territory. However it is also true that although Ahmadou Ahidjo included reunification on his political programme after taking over the premiership of the French Cameroon from Andre Marie Mbida on February 18, 1958, the concept of reunification still eluded his understanding by January 1960. As he gradually assimilated the implications of reunification, Ahmadou Ahidjo and his collaborators actively worked for it.

#### **D. French Cameroonians Canvass for Reunification**

While Foncha went out to woo French Cameroonians, some of them actively took part in the pre-plebiscite campaigns between 1959 and 1961. Individuals like Paul Soppo Priso, Douala Yondo, Sultan Seidou Njoya Njimouluh and Ahmadou Ahidjo travelled to the

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid, p. 107.

Southern Cameroons and addressed huge crowds in support of reunification<sup>662</sup>.

Apart from pro-unification public lectures, officials of the Bamileke Welfare Union and the Bamileke business class raised several hundreds of thousands of CFA Francs through solicitations in the eastern border districts and handed to the reunificationists<sup>663</sup>. In fact the KNDP made no secret of the huge sums of money it received from the Government of Ahidjo and from individual like Paul Soppo Priso<sup>664</sup>. Financial assistance from Soppo Priso permitted the KNDP to acquire a printing machine for the production of the KNDP propaganda paper the Cameroon Times<sup>665</sup>. Ndeh Ntumazah also accepted that Paul Soppo Priso gave him money in Douala to finance the plebiscite campaign<sup>666</sup>. The display of wealth by the reunificationists (KNDP had all season vehicles, or land rovers, high quality loud speakers, sufficient petrol for movement and printed electoral and propaganda material) was indicative of financial assistance from French Cameroon and the future prosperity promised by reunification.

Besides, French Cameroonians promised to assist in the socio-economic development of the Southern Cameroons if the territory gained independence with French Cameroon. In this connection, KNDP friends across the Mungo brought a number of bulldozers and cater pillars to parade up and down the streets of Kumba town at the eve of the plebiscite<sup>667</sup>. To French Cameroonians, these were machines that stood ready to open roads everywhere in the territory if the Southern Cameroonians opted for the Republic of Cameroon. This strategy was used in Bamenda and Victoria and many people

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<sup>662</sup>According to Musa Njoya of Bamum extraction interviewed at Ndop on January 6, 2009, Sultan Njoya dispatched emissaries to the Ndop plain Chiefdom at the eve of the plebiscite to convince Bamum dissidents settled there to vote for reunification in order to guarantee continuous contact with their ethnic base.

<sup>663</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 133.

<sup>664</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p. 133.

<sup>665</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p. 133.

<sup>666</sup> Asong and Chi, *Ndeh Ntumazah, A conversational Autobiography*, p. 197.

<sup>667</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p. 134.

who opted for the Republic of Cameroon in the 1961 plebiscite believed that development would follow immediately<sup>668</sup>. This strategy also influenced Southern Cameroonians because after forty years with Nigeria, they had no roads, electricity, government secondary schools and no hospitals. They had never seen bulldozers or caterpillars, thus many believed it was time to try the other side of the borders.

This belief in reunification as a factor of development was reinforced when the Minister of Works and Transport W.N.O. Effiom disclosed to the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly that the Government of the Cameroon Republic had agreed to help with the construction of the Kumba- Mamfe road by making certain road machinery available at very low hire rates<sup>669</sup>. This was a response to the request of Mr Solomon Tandeng Muna the then Minister of Works and Transport who visited Yaounde in November 1959. On March 19, 1960, the following items necessary to expedite work on the Kumba- Mamfe road arrived from Yaounde; one M.G.12 grader, one soil excavator, one mobile workshop and trailer, one bitumen preheater, one broom drag, one pneumatic tyred tractor, one bitumen distributor. In addition, one plant operator and three mechanics were supplied from Douala<sup>670</sup>. This aid from Yaounde was seen as a sign of Yaounde's readiness to help develop a territory that was neglected by the British and Nigerians. Many therefore believed that reunification was to lead to some social and economic development.

Another weapon used by French Cameroonians in the plebiscite campaign was the diffusion of nationalist music from French Cameroon. Hon. Sam Mofor one of the greatest campaigners of the times, selected Music from French Cameroon especially the sound entitled "*Merengue independence*" which he dished through giant loud speakers mounted on land rovers across Bamenda or Abakpa town<sup>671</sup>. Each time the citizens of the Abakpa town heard that piece of music, they were reminded that independence was coming only if

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<sup>668</sup> Achidi Achu, 84, Politician, Santa. 10 January, 2009.

<sup>669</sup>NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no.720.

<sup>670</sup>NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no.725.

<sup>671</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 133.

they would vote wisely, that is, vote for reunification. The music often played incessantly from morning to 4 pm when Sam Mofor started campaign lectures. The campaign theme that followed the music focused on the advantages of reunification such as “joining our brothers in view of building a prosperous father land”<sup>672</sup>.

The term “Kamerun” first used by French Cameroonians in 1949 was also strongly used as a campaign weapon by the reunificationists at the eve of the plebiscite. The pro-reunificationists placed heavy emphasis on the name which they advanced as proof that the country should join with the Republic and reject Nigeria. French Cameroonians insisted that “we are Kamerunians and not Nigerians” and that those opposed to reunification were traitors to the Kamerun Nation. This argument was difficult for the CPNC to break down. Appeals to this kind of patriotism, which asserted the existence of a “Kamerun Nation” or of an opportunity through the plebiscite to create one, constituted about 12 percent of the arguments expressed on behalf of reunification in the pro-KNDP newspapers during the plebiscite campaign.<sup>673</sup> French Cameroonians should therefore be credited for providing the pro-reunification parties with a rallying term which permitted an indirect appeal to anti-Nigerian sentiment without identifying it as such.

Besides, the French Cameroonians who emphasized on the recreation of “Kamerun” also gave the opportunity to Foncha and the KNDP Government to give the impression that support for reunification (Cameroon or Kamerun) could be equated with loyalty to the government and the state which many saw as the same thing<sup>674</sup>. Dr Emmanuel Endeley himself later claimed that the plebiscite vote was invalid and inappropriate as a test of the true

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<sup>672</sup> Ade Ngwa, 83years, Retired Civil Administrator and Politician, Bamenda, January 7, 2009.

<sup>673</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.150.

<sup>674</sup> Foncha’s Government used the *Cameroon Times* in 1959, 1960, and 1961 to convince many that Foncha represented the government in power and the name “Cameroon”. Many people could not therefore see the difference between the state and the government. Ethnic groups loyal to Foncha had to work for reunification.

wishes of the people, because “the plebiscite was generally understood only as an issue between those tribes controlling the Government and those tribes whose leaders are in the opposition and who wish therefore to unseat the Government.”<sup>675</sup> The reunification band wagon was therefore increased by those who were influenced by French Cameroonian attempts to equate reunification with loyalty to Cameroon.

Perhaps the most effective way French Cameroonians supported reunification was to support KNDP hooliganism whose duty was to intimidate, prevent from lecturing and if very necessary beat up lecturers or campaigners of the opposing Cameroon Peoples National Congress<sup>676</sup>. KNDP hooligans backed by French Cameroon settlers’ disturbed and prevented the supporters of integration from lecturing in Santa, Mankon, Nso, Bambui and Ndop<sup>677</sup>.

The French Cameroun settlers who joined KNDP and became hooligans were protected by the Government of John Ngu Foncha. Their activities prevented the people from listening to the opponents of the KNDP. Many therefore opted for independence with the Republic of Cameroon during the plebiscite thinking that they were voting for secession which the KNDP had promised because enlightenment lectures given by the Plebiscite Enlightenment Officers with the intention to explain the two plebiscite alternatives were ineffective in most places<sup>678</sup>.

Public Enlightenment Campaigns were a series of public speeches by plebiscite officials recruited by the UN [largely from Britain] describing the process of the plebiscite to the people who had never voted before.[ There had in fact been at least one election a year or two before, but the franchise had only extended to men with a certain amount of property, whereas this ballot was to be open to all men and women over the age of 21] The officers were required

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<sup>675</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.151.

<sup>676</sup> In June 1960 the KNC/KPP alliance held a convention in Mamfe in preparation for the plebiscite and the delegates agreed to form one party the CPCN so as to better advocate “association with Nigeria”.

<sup>677</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 271.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid

to explain the procedures of registration and balloting and the broad aims of the whole enterprise, without venturing into any discussion about the choices the people would have to make<sup>679</sup>. The idea of preventing people from attending enlightenment lectures was so widespread that only a few places can be mentioned as examples. At Ndop and Bafreng, the KNDP backed by French Cameroonians campaigned strongly to prevent the people from attending these lectures; indeed, in these two areas, the enlightenment officers were expelled from the scene. Any other person who attempted to explain the two alternatives was threatened and forced to be silent<sup>680</sup>.

Apart from hooliganism and obstructionist politics, French Cameroon officials made several efforts to counter the campaign declarations of the opposition in the Southern Cameroons. For example, one of the statements in the platform of the CPNC was that the Government of the new Republic of Cameroon would join the French Community. In response, the authorities in French Cameroon issued press statements to counter the rumour. When Solomon Tandeng Muna led a delegation to French Cameroon in 1959, Mr. Andre Fouda, Ahidjo's minister for Natural Economy and Mayor of Yaounde, and Mr. Charles Okala,

Minister of Justice, made specific reference to this rumour and categorically stated that it was untrue. Solomon Tandeng Muna remarked during the 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Executive Council of the Southern Cameroons in December 1959, that;

Wherever I went, and with whomever I talked, it was made abundantly clear that the new state will not join the French Community. I think it is important that the people of the Southern Cameroons should be made aware of this fact, so that no one will be misled by statements to the contrary<sup>681</sup>.

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<sup>679</sup> Percival, *Southern Cameroons Plebiscite*, p. 22.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> NAB, File tb/1959/2, p. 2.



The persistent denial of such anti-reunification rumours from the CPNC discredited the CPNC campaign and increased the desire for reunification.

However this persistent denial of rumours that Ahmadou Ahidjo was to join the French Community was only intended to serve the interest of reunification because Ahmadou Ahidjo was too committed to France and to the French Community. On May 10, 1958, in a speech marking the first celebration of the national holiday of French Cameroon, Amadou Ahidjo declared;

We shall never forget, when the time comes, the innumerable bonds which unite us to France. . . With the same ideals, free from all hindrances, we shall be able to determine with full clarity, on a plane of equality but also of friendship, the conditions of our association with a vaster organization which will be, we earnestly hope, inspired by France<sup>682</sup>.

French Cameroon or rather Ahmadou Ahidjo, had been united to France by innumerable bonds and the vaster organization with which French Cameroon would associate on the footing of equality and of friendship and which would be inspired by France, could be nothing other than the French Community. With this commitment, it was difficult for Ahmadou Ahidjo to contemplate Foncha's demand that the reunified Cameroon pull-out of the French Community. This was possibly the reason for Ahmadou Ahidjo's lukewarm attitude towards reunification before 1960 when he visited the Southern Cameroons.

Ahmadou Ahidjo's visit to the Southern Cameroons helped much to add to the flame and the urge for reunification. John Ngu Foncha invited Ahmadou Ahidjo to the Southern Cameroons in July 1960 so that the two could agree on the basis of negotiations which would take place shortly about the reunification of the two territories should the results of the forth-coming plebiscite be in favour of reunification<sup>683</sup>. John Ngu Foncha knew that such a visit could also

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<sup>682</sup> Cited in Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p.210.

<sup>683</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, P, 112.

give more impetus to the dynamics of reunification. On July 15, 1960, Ahmadou Ahidjo, his prime minister, president of the national assembly, some ministers and parliamentarians arrived Tiko airport and were welcomed by John Ngu Foncha and the Commissioner for the Southern Cameroons. Responding to a welcome speech delivered by the commissioner, Ahmadou Ahidjo declared that their desire was reunification and not annexation<sup>684</sup>. He went further to indicate that bigger nations were uniting and the time had come for the two Cameroons to unite and form one nation. In his view, reunification had to be followed by unity with other African countries to form the United States of Africa<sup>685</sup>. Ahidjo's declarations at the Tiko airport were reassuring and many sceptics who feared French domination in the reunited Cameroon were wooed. (See appendix 3 for the full text of his speeches in Tiko and Victoria)

After the reception and working session in Buea, a communiqué with four resolutions was published. In the communiqué, the two parties reaffirmed the strong desire of their people for reunification that would be on a federal basis adaptable to conditions peculiar to all sections of Cameroon. They decided to set up a joint committee to study the various constitutional problems that may result from reunification. Lastly the communiqué indicated that a conference shall be held on a later date to examine the proposals of the joint committee<sup>686</sup>. It is an irrefutable fact that these resolutions were the foundation on which the reunification edifice was going to be constructed and the resolutions were largely influenced by Ahidjos' presence in Buea, his declarations, and desire to woo the sceptics of reunification.

On Saturday, July 17, 1960 John Ngu Foncha took Ahmadou Ahidjo to the people for him to canvass for reunification. An estimated crowd of 5000 people assembled in Victoria to welcome Ahmadou Ahidjo. In a speech in Victoria, Ahmadou Ahidjo reminded his audience that although there were difficulties in

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<sup>684</sup> Ibid

<sup>685</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*. P. 126.

<sup>686</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 114.

achieving reunification, no difficulty was insurmountable to two brothers who, separated by history, wanted to reunite<sup>687</sup>. This declaration was a response to the views of the integrationists who claimed that reunification was impossible because of linguistic, social, cultural and economic obstacles.

At Victoria, Ahmadou Ahidjo again mentioned his government's desire for reunification and not annexation. He also insisted that reunification would be on a federal basis. He expressed the hope that the Southern Cameroonians would vote to remain Cameroonians and work for a prosperous Cameroon nation<sup>688</sup>. Before taking off for Yaounde, Ahmadou Ahidjo declared to pressmen at the Tiko airport that he was "not going into the French union"<sup>689</sup>. This was another response to the anti- reunificationists who were convincing the electorate that the Republic of Cameroon would take the Southern Cameroons into the French union in case they opted for reunification. This declaration certainly influenced many.

In fact Ahidjo's speech to the Victoria population was largely focused on the issues that were being raised by the CPNC to discredit reunification. He said;

...Des gens de mauvaise foi vous disent d'abord que nous avons décidé ou que nous déciderons d'entrer dans la communauté française. Je voudrais apporter ici un démenti solennel et formel pour cette affirmation mensongère. La République du Cameroun entend vivre en amitié avec tous les peuples, y compris et surtout l'ancienne tutrice, la France; il n'est pas question pour nous de renoncer à notre indépendance totale et de nous intégrer dans une quelconque communauté.

On dit, d'autre part, que nous n'avons plus les mêmes habitudes, que nous n'avons plus la même langue et moi je dis: Si vous, de votre côté, vous avez réussi à avoir les mêmes habitudes que les Anglais en quelques décades et nous, si nous avons réussi

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<sup>687</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 137.

<sup>688</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.116.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid, p. 117.

à avoir la même langue que la France en quelque décades, comment ne pourrions-nous pas, nous qui sommes frères, nous qui sommes appelés à vivre jusqu'à la fin du monde, ne pourrions-nous pas nous entendre et avoir les mêmes habitudes de la même langue?

On dit encore que les uns et les autres, nous sommes pauvres, que nous ne pourrions pas nous suffire à nous-mêmes. Nous le sommes peut-être, mais il n'y a aucune honte à être pauvre et rien ne dit que ceux qui sont pauvres aujourd'hui le resteront toujours.

D'autre part, on n'a jamais vu un chef d'une famille pauvre aller vendre une partie de sa famille à un voisin riche pour vivre heureux.<sup>690</sup>

These declarations completely weakened the arguments of those who were against reunification on the grounds that there existed cultural differences between the two territories. Ahidjo was also acclaimed by many who listened to him as a devoted and reassuring reunificationist.

Ahmadou Ahidjo also visited Kumba and addressed a crowd at Hausa quarters. During the meeting, he told the heterogeneous Kumba crowd that reunification was a natural cry and a debt bequeathed onto the Cameroonians by their grandparents<sup>691</sup>. He also insisted that the reunited Cameroon would be a federation so as to preserve the distinctive identities of the two communities.

In fact Ahidjo's communion with the masses in the Southern Cameroons was of the greatest political importance. First, John Ngu Foncha had been to Yaounde twice and it was only normal that Ahidjo should visit the Southern Cameroons in order to be known by the population of the trust territory and also demonstrate his support for reunification. Secondly, Ahmadou Ahidjo publicly admitted that the Republic of Cameroon wanted reunification on a federal basis. Since the crowd that listened to him was a heterogeneous group composed of Bamenda people, Bamileke, Bassa, Eton, Bulu, Duala,

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<sup>690</sup> Recueil des discours présidentiels 1957 février 1968, p.114.

<sup>691</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p. 133.

Bayangi, Bafang, Bakweri working in the CDC plantations, at the Victoria port or simply engaged in petty trading in Victoria or Kumba, it can reasonably be assumed that this declaration eventually spread far and wide across the Southern Cameroons thus paving a clear path to reunification.

Like Ahmadou Ahidjo, other dignitaries from French Cameroon also visited the territory encouraging “strangers” from French Cameroon to promote reunification. Bamoun notables certainly acting on the instructions of Sultan Seidou Njoya, held secret meetings with their kin and kith in the Ndop chiefdoms to convince the electorate to choose reunification during the plebiscite<sup>692</sup>. These meetings were so common that in a welcome address to Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha on March 1, 1960, the people of Balikumbat said;

In this village, strangers from the Eastern Cameroon who have settled here have a dangerous union whose meetings are secret. The meetings are more frequent now than ever before and refugees from the Eastern Cameroon figure prominently in these meetings.<sup>693</sup>

During these meetings, strategies were certainly put to place to ensure favourable results at the plebiscite. Such meetings were also reported in the villages of Bamessing, Bambalang, Babessi and Bagonlang that shared common borders with the Bamum kingdom.

## **E. The Conduct of the Plebiscite**

The conduct or organization of the plebiscite was the subject of conferences and great debates. The principal issues that had to be handled centred on the nature of the consultation, the plebiscite questions and the conditions for participation. The presence of more

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<sup>692</sup> Musa Njoya, 87years, Retired Civil Servant, Ndop, Jan. 6, 2009

<sup>693</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release no.690, March 3, 1960

than 30.000 French Cameroonians potential voters greatly influenced the position of the key politicians on these issues.

In February 1959, the thirteenth session of the UN took up the Southern Cameroons issue. During the debates, John Ngu Foncha called for the separation of the territory from the federation of Nigeria and its ultimate reunification with French Cameroon by mutual discussions and agreement. Dr Emmanuel Endeley opposed Foncha's proposal and rejected his assertion that the Southern Cameroons wanted separation from Nigeria and reunification with French Cameroon. Dr Emmanuel Endeley repeated the KNC-KPP alliance platform, which was continuous association with Nigeria. The thirteenth session of the UN General Assembly finally agreed that a plebiscite should be held to decide the issue<sup>694</sup>.

The Southern Cameroons delegates were also divided on the questions which should be presented to voters as well as on the qualification of the voters. John Ngu Foncha wanted the people to be asked to choose between separation from the federation of Nigeria or integration with Nigeria. Dr Emmanuel Endeley wanted the plebiscite questions to focus on either reunification with French Cameroon or integration with Nigeria. On voters' qualification, John

Ngu Foncha argued that Nigerians and French Cameroonians who were residing in the Southern Cameroons should not be given the franchise. Endeley on his part wanted Nigerians and French Cameroonians residing in the territory to be enfranchised<sup>695</sup>. John Ngu Foncha knew that there were more Igbo (Nigerians) than French Cameroonians amongst the "strangers" population an enfranchising them could facilitate the task for the integrationists. As a result of the lack of a consensus, the delegates were advised to return home and reach a compromise.

When the delegates returned home a plebiscite conference chaired by Sir Sidney Phillipson was organized in Mamfe in August 1959. The conference was to settle two issues. Who should vote in the plebiscite and what questions should be put to the voters. John

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<sup>694</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.125.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid

Ngu Foncha began deliberations by insisting that the plebiscite questions should be centred on integration or association with Nigeria and a separate state of the Southern Cameroons. According to him reunification could not be one of the alternatives because it had to be negotiated and achieved by common agreement<sup>696</sup>. As for voters' qualification, he insisted that only the indigenes of the Southern Cameroons should register and vote. Foncha argued that;

... it is the future of the Southern Cameroons indigenes which will be affected. Therefore they alone should be allowed to decide what they want. We believe that any attempt to allow strangers domiciled in the territory to vote would bias the whole issue and make the results of the plebiscite questionable and therefore leaving the issue unresolved. The influence of strangers in the last general and local elections is an eye opener as to which way they will vote. We want no outside influence to bear on this matter. We do not want anybody apart from Southern Cameroonians to have the blame after the plebiscite.<sup>697</sup>

John Ngu Foncha therefore opposed the enfranchisement of "strangers" for the plebiscite even though he was quite aware of the support French Cameroon "strangers" provided to the reunification cause. He knew that there were more "strangers" from Nigeria than French Cameroon in the Southern Cameroons.

Dr Emmanuel Endeley repeated his position of February 1959 at the UN. On the question of who should vote at the plebiscite, he said that it was contrary both to the Trusteeship Agreement and to international law to exclude Nigerians and French Cameroonians as advocated by the KNDP. He proposed that all qualified candidates should be allowed to vote since they all had a stake in the future of the territory<sup>698</sup>. Dr Emmanuel Endeley knew that there were more

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<sup>696</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites," p. 173.

<sup>697</sup>NAB, Southern Cameroons Press Release no. 410 of July 31, 1959.

<sup>698</sup>Ibid.

Nigerians in the territory and that the enfranchisement of strangers could permit them vote in favour of integration with Nigeria.

The Kamerun Society represented at the Mamfe Conference by Nicholas Ade Ngwa, declared that only indigenous Cameroonians should be allowed to vote. Nicholas Ade Ngwa went further to indicate that the KNC-KPP government recently passed a motion disfranchising French Cameroonians in an ordinary election so it was therefore surprising that Dr Emmanuel Endeley wanted them to take part in such an important affair when the fate of a nation was being decided for good<sup>699</sup>.

Ndeh Ntumazah speaking for the OK party said that the question should be “do you wish to reunify with an independent French Cameroon”? And that only Cameroonians should vote<sup>700</sup>. The OK insisted that all people with Cameroonians citizenship by birth or nationality should be allowed to vote. French Cameroonians with evidence of a year’s continuous stay in the Southern Cameroons should also be allowed to vote.

The National Union of Kamerun Students was represented at the conference by Thomas Nchinda, a medical student of French Cameroon origins who was studying in Nigeria.<sup>701</sup> He recommended on behalf of the students that the question should be secession and ultimate reunification. For voting qualification; he saw no difference between British and French Cameroonians<sup>702</sup>. Thomas Nchinda therefore declared that “Kamerunians only, and Kamerunians without distinction between those from the French sector and those of the Southern and Northern British sector should be allowed to vote”<sup>703</sup>. It was therefore only Thomas Nchinda, the French Cameroonian present at Mamfe and the OK (an offshoot of the French Cameroon UPC) who did not oppose the right for French Cameroonians to vote during the plebiscite. Again the deadlock over the enfranchisement or not of French Cameroonians was an

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<sup>699</sup>Ibid.

<sup>700</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 127

<sup>701</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 227.

<sup>702</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 127.

<sup>703</sup>NAB, Southern Cameroons Press Release no. 410 of July 31, 1959.



indication that the main political actors were aware of the importance of the votes of this group. Since the Mamfe conference failed to settle on the plebiscite questions, the issue was referred to the Twenty –Fourth session of the UN General Assembly in September –October 1959. Cohen, the British representative who tabled the issue at the UN indicated that it was not a problem between the administering authority and the dependent people but a problem of how to resolve certain differing views held by different political parties operating democratically within the territory<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p. 185.

**Plate 9: Ndeh Ntumazah and Thomas Nchinda**



**Source:** Professor Nasah's collection

**NOTE:** Ntumazah who was in fact an errand boy for Nkamsi and the French Cameroonian OK leaders and Thomas Nchinda of Dschang ancestry were the only delegates at the Mamfe 1959 Conference to ask for French Cameroonian Participation in the 1961 plebiscite

Despite this preliminary declaration, Cohen introduced the Southern Cameroon political leaders except Ndeh Ntumazah leader of the French Cameroonian dominated OK<sup>705</sup>. The British were therefore preventing Ndeh Ntumazah from expressing the views of those who believed in immediate reunification. This was the stance of French Cameroonians.

Even John Ngu Foncha who spoke first after Cohen's introduction indicated that reunification was a possibility which could

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<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

be achieved only by negotiation by those who were ready for it and no one section of Kamerun was yet ready for it<sup>706</sup>. John Ngu Foncha therefore gave the impression that reunification was not an urgency and that Dr Emmanuel Endeley was pushing it because he intended to use it to frighten the people into voting for reunification with Nigeria. John Ngu Foncha therefore wanted a plebiscite with two alternatives; integration and secession. Dr Emmanuel Endeley wanted a plebiscite with two alternatives; integration and reunification. Ndeh Ntumazah wanted the plebiscite alternatives to be, self-government within Nigeria versus independence through reunification<sup>707</sup>. After a long debate, Cohen got Foncha and Endeley to negotiate. The outcome was a compromise which settled the problems of the alternatives to be put at the plebiscite and the voters' qualification. It was published as resolution 1352 (xiv) of the General Assembly.

The compromise stated that the arrangement for the plebiscite should begin on September 30, 1960, and end not later than March 1961. The questions to be put at the plebiscite were

A. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent federation of Nigeria?

B. Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independence Republic of Cameroon?<sup>708</sup>.

Voters had to be persons of twenty –one years and above. Only persons born in the Southern Cameroons or one of whose parents were born in the Southern Cameroons had the right to vote. French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons saluted this compromise and end of imbroglio at the UN. It was a victory for them because they had worked for the reunification of the Cameroons within the OK and wanted reunification as one of the plebiscite alternatives. However, Tagne Messac a French Cameroonian militant of the OK,

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<sup>706</sup> Ibid, p. 186.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid, p. 191.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

Bamenda branch petitioned the compromise because it extended Trusteeship in the Southern Cameroons<sup>709</sup>. Tchoula on behalf of the Bandeng Population and the OK condemned the compromise in a petition on October 7, 1959 because it delayed independence<sup>710</sup>. These two initial French Cameroonian reactions to the Foncha-Endeley compromise indicates that they were determined to see the territory liberated and reunification with French Cameroon effected immediately.

The plebiscite conditions especially the voters' qualification opened the way for French Cameroonians to vote and consequently achieve reunification or at least improve on the result of the plebiscite in favour of reunification. There was a large population of French Cameroonian settlers in the territory at the eve of the plebiscite. Many of them had at least one of their parents born in the Southern Cameroons. Many had also changed their names and could not easily be identified as "strangers" since they were living with their kin and kith in the border villages. The KNDP as the party in power cleverly manipulated the situation and many of these French Cameroonians were registered as voters<sup>711</sup>.

In the election regulations in the Southern Cameroons, provision was made for an annual revision of the register of voters commencing each year in May. In 1960, therefore, the District Officer for Victoria at the request of the KNDP government published a notice informing the electorate of 10 years residential qualification for neither persons who were neither British subjects nor British protected persons<sup>712</sup>. This encouraged French Cameroonians who qualified to register for the plebiscite. Registration by French Cameroonians was massive and in October 1960, Mr. Gabriel Benedict of the CPNC new –Town, Victoria wrote to the Senior District Officer Victoria to complain that French

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<sup>709</sup> Ibid, p. 199.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid.

<sup>711</sup> Ebune, *Growth of Political Parties*, p. 190.

<sup>712</sup> NAB, file Vc/1960/2, Revision of the Register of Electors, 1960, p. 58.

Cameroonians who had not got the 10 years residential qualification were enthusiastically registering on the voters list.

Approximately 150 objections were received by the Senior District Officer for Victoria on the registration of some unqualified French Cameroonians<sup>713</sup>. On January 6, 1961 the Chief Electoral Officer in Buea wrote to the Senior District Officer in Victoria to drop the objections for lack of evidence. Since it was difficult to distinguish between French Cameroonians who qualified and those who did not given that there were no birth registration or birth certificates, the KNDP government manipulated and got many of these unqualified settlers to vote. For example, it was alleged that the KNDP paid taxes for some of them in order to enable them justify 10 years residence and register on voters list.

In fact on the eve of the plebiscite, hundreds of people crossed the border into Tiko, Victoria, Tombel and took part in the plebiscite<sup>714</sup>. This view is also that of John Percival who served as plebiscite official in Wum. According to him, there was an influx of illicit voters from across the borders that influenced the plebiscite result in the coastal districts<sup>715</sup>. These people certainly opted for reunification since they came from French Cameroun. These “ambulance voters” certainly influenced the plebiscite result if we take into consideration Mallam L.I Sale’s Petition of February 24, 1961 to the UN plebiscite commissioner. The petitioner, leader of the Muslim Congress Party, Bansa, Complained that;

Members from the Republic of Cameroon resident in the Southern Cameroons and some crossed from the villages on the boundaries and voted without any question...

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<sup>713</sup> Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>714</sup> Chief Endeley, about 84years, Retired Chief Justice, Politician, Buea, August 2002

<sup>715</sup> Percival, *Southern Cameroons Plebiscite*, p.63. This was also true for Nso and Ndop as many Informants indicated that many “Easterners” took part in the Plebiscite.

After the plebiscite, those who supported Federation of Nigeria are being victimized by KNDP as the government party supported by members of the Republic of Cameroon and refugees settled in the Southern Cameroons<sup>716</sup>.

Besides, it was also difficult to ascertain whether a person was born in the Southern Cameroons or not. In a territory where there were no birth registers and birth certificates, the determination of a voter's nationality was left in the hands of the young and inexperienced registration officers<sup>717</sup>. These officers were manipulated by the KNDP and many reunificationists from French Cameroon were enfranchised. This was confirmed by Joseph Forkum CPNC president for Mankon town in a petition to the commissioner for the Southern Cameroons on February 7, 1961. In the petition, he said:

There is no birth register and birth certificates in the Southern Cameroons and the method of ascertaining whether a person was born in the Southern Cameroons was a matter of common sense, a discretion of young and inexperienced registration officers –who in most central towns and villages on the border with the Republic of Cameroon did registration under and with the assistance or Quarter heads who were members of the Republic of Cameroon resident in the Southern Cameroons. As a result of this situation and the fact that reunification mania is stronger in large settlements and in the border villages with large and influential settlers from the Republic of Cameroon, lots of people from the republic of Cameroon not at all qualified to be registered had registered in settlements like Abakpa Bamenda, Bafreng Bamenda, Santa, Guzang, Bali Kumbat, Bambalang, Banfanji, Babessi, Bali Bako etc. Worse of all instead of the applicants for registration being asked to prove in evidence that he or she was born in the Southern Cameroons or one of his or her parents was born in the southern Cameroon, it has been the person

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<sup>716</sup> PAB, file Nw/Vc/A1959/2: Southern Cameroons Plebiscite Petitions p. 62

<sup>717</sup> F, Langsi, 74years, Retired Teacher, Bali, Jan.11,2009.

objecting who should pay a deposit of some amount and prove his or her objections in evidence<sup>718</sup>.

With these organizational hitches, it is obvious that with the overwhelming and fanatic support enjoyed by the reunificationists from the Republic of Cameroon, many people from the Republic of Cameroon, crossed the borders to join French Cameroonians settlers to vote for reunification during the plebiscites. This was confirmed by Che Robert who policed the polls in Muyuka. According to him, there was a massive participation of French Cameroonians with or without the ten years residential qualification in the plebiscite in Muyuka, Batoke and Likumba<sup>719</sup>

## **F. Results of the Plebiscite**

On February 11, 1961, about 331.312 registered voters of the Southern Cameroons solemnly took part in the plebiscite in the six administrative divisions and plebiscite Districts.

From the table below, 233.571 Southern Cameroonians voted for reunification with the Republic of Cameroon while only 97.741 voted for independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria. The KNDP and the reunificationists thus emerged victorious.

A close look at the results or KNDP victory can show some French Cameroonian influence. In Nkambe where there were very few French Cameroonians, a majority voted for Nigeria probably because of the ethnic and boundary links with Nigeria and British Northern Cameroon<sup>720</sup>. Nkambe East which shared boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon had about a 2000 majority in favour of Cameroon. This means ethnic relations with the Republic of Cameroon or the presence of some French Cameroonians influenced the plebiscite results in this District.

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<sup>718</sup> PAB, file NW/vc/A1959/2, p.57.

<sup>719</sup> Che Robert, 75years, Retired Police Inspector, Bamenda, March 12, 2009. Che joined the Southern Cameroon Police in April 1958 and was trained in Enugu and Ikeja alongside many youths of French Cameroon origins.

<sup>720</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p. 307.

Many writers have identified the overwhelming vote for reunification in the Bamenda Division to the presence and popularity of two reunificationists, Foncha and Ntumazah. However it should be understood that this was the most populous area of the Southern Cameroons with an extensive boundary with the Republic of Cameroon. This division had an important number of French Cameroonians especially in the border communities of Babessi, Bambalang, Bangolang, BaliKumbat, Awing, Santa, Bali, Widikum, Guzang and Bamenda town<sup>721</sup>.

It was also in this division that French Cameroonians and KNDP hooligans prevented CPNC lecturers or campaigners and ‘enlightenment officers’ who had to explain the two alternatives to the electorate from lecturing the people<sup>722</sup>. It was still in this Division that some French Cameroonians crossed the borders and participated in the plebiscite according to the petitions of Mallam L.I. Sale and Joseph Forkum, members of the Muslim Congress Party and CPNC in Bamenda Division respectively<sup>723</sup>. The Bamenda North (Nso) and Bamenda East (Ndop) plebiscite districts where there were complains of hooliganism from French Cameroonians and the presences of Bamum voters, registered good scores in favour of reunification. Nso had 18.839 for and 8.073 against reunification while Ndop had 17.856 for and 1.822 against reunification<sup>724</sup>. It can therefore be concluded that if giant Bamenda with 108.485 votes for reunification against 12.341 swung the pendulum in favour of reunification, it was also because French Cameroonians in the division campaigned for reunification, obstructed the opposing camp from campaigning and voted for reunification.

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<sup>721</sup> Achidi Achu, age 84, Retired Politician, Santa, Jan., 2009.

<sup>722</sup> Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p.271.

<sup>723</sup> PAB, Nw /vc/A 1959/ 2 Southern Cameroons Plebiscite Petitions, p. 62

<sup>724</sup>NAB, Southern Cameroons Press Release no.1217.-Southern Cameroons Plebiscite.



**Table 8: Results by Number of Votes in the Southern Cameroons Plebiscite**

| <b>Administrative Divisions and<br/>Plebiscite Districts</b> | <b>No. of<br/>Votes for<br/>Nigeria</b> | <b>No. of<br/>Votes for<br/>Cameroon</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <u>Nkambe Division</u>                                       |                                         |                                          |
| Nkambe North                                                 | 5.962                                   | 1.917                                    |
| Nkambe East                                                  | 3.845                                   | 5.896                                    |
| Nkambe Central                                               | 5.095                                   | 4.288                                    |
| Nkambe South                                                 | 7.051                                   | 2.921                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>21.917</b>                           | <b>15.022</b>                            |
| <u>Wum Division</u>                                          |                                         |                                          |
| Wum North                                                    | 1.485                                   | 7.322                                    |
| Wum Central                                                  | 1.644                                   | 3.211                                    |
| Wum East                                                     | 1.518                                   | 13.133                                   |
| Wum West                                                     | 2.137                                   | 3.449                                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>8.784</b>                            | <b>27.115</b>                            |
| <u>Bamenda Division</u>                                      |                                         |                                          |
| Bamenda North (Nso)                                          | 8.073                                   | 18.839                                   |
| Bamenda East (Ndop)                                          | 1.822                                   | 17.856                                   |
| Bamenda Central West (Bafut)                                 | 1.230                                   | 18.021                                   |
| Bamenda East (Ngemba)                                        | 529                                     | 18.193                                   |
| Bamenda West (Menemo, Ngie-gue)                              | 467                                     | 16.142                                   |
| BamendaSouth(BaliNyonga,Moghamo<br>)                         | 220                                     | 19.426                                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>12.341</b>                           | <b>108.485</b>                           |

| <b>Administrative Divisions and<br/>Plebiscite Districts</b> | <b>No. of<br/>Votes for<br/>Nigeria</b> | <b>No. of Votes<br/>for Cameroon</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>Mamfe Division</u>                                        |                                         |                                      |
| Mamfe West                                                   | 2.039                                   | 8.505                                |
| Mamfe North                                                  | 5.432                                   | 6.410                                |
| Mamfe South                                                  | 685                                     | 8.175                                |

| <b>Administrative Divisions and<br/>Plebiscite Districts</b> | <b>No. of<br/>Votes for<br/>Nigeria</b> | <b>No. of Votes<br/>for Cameroon</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Mamfe East                                                   | 1.894                                   | 10.177                               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>10.070</b>                           | <b>33.267</b>                        |
| <u>Kumba Division</u>                                        |                                         |                                      |
| Kumba North East                                             | 9.466                                   | 11.991                               |
| Kumba North West                                             | 14.738                                  | 555                                  |
| Kumba South East                                             | 6.105                                   | 12.827                               |
| Kumba South West                                             | 2.424                                   | 12.227                               |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>32.733</b>                           | <b>27.600</b>                        |
| <u>Victoria Division</u>                                     |                                         |                                      |
| Victoria South West                                          | 2.552                                   | 3.756                                |
| Victoria South East                                          | 1.329                                   | 4.870                                |
| Victoria North West                                          | 4.744                                   | 4.205                                |
| Victoria North East                                          | 3.291                                   | 9.251                                |
| <b>Total</b>                                                 | <b>11.916</b>                           | <b>22.082</b>                        |
| <b>Grand Total (Southern<br/>Cameroons)</b>                  | <b>97.741</b>                           | <b>233.571</b>                       |

***Source:** Southern Cameroon Press Release No. 1217 – Southern Cameroon Plebiscite.*

Kumba Division, home of Nerijs Namaso Mbile leader of the KPP after mid –1959 and later, Deputy Leader of the CPNC, registered a majority vote for Nigeria. However, apart from the Kumba North West District, all the other districts voted for reunification. Kumba especially the Northwest district had a significant boundary with Nigeria. The north east, south east and south west districts had extensive boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon on the East. This division had an important and influential settler population from the Bamenda zone and French Cameroon. The indigenous ethnic groups such as the Bakossi, Bakundu, Bafaw, and Balondo all petitioned or complained to the UN after the

declaration of the plebiscite results<sup>725</sup>. It was the division that complained most after the plebiscite. In one of the petitions on February 27, 1961 the Balondo indicated that they voted for Nigeria because the 'sinister motive' of the grasslanders in voting for reunification was to drag the coastal people "to a lawless society" where they would then seize the Balondo fertile lands which they envied<sup>726</sup>. These grasslanders in question were in fact Bamileke farmers in Kumba and other towns<sup>727</sup>. The petitions from these ethnic groups against reunification and the fear of 'land expropriation' raised in the petition indicated that the majority who voted for reunification in Kumba Division were settlers and French Cameroonians in particular who knew the benefits of reunification

.Victoria was the smallest division in both population and geographical size. It however contained the headquarters of many economic activities of the Southern Cameroons including some of the plantations of the CDC and all the seaports. Victoria therefore had an influential settler population. At the time of the plebiscite there were probably more settlers than the indigenous Bakweri people in the Victoria Division<sup>728</sup>. Among these the majority of plantation and seaport workers were French Cameroonians.

Indeed Victoria Division belonged to the same ethnic group with the Duala of the Republic of Cameroon. In 1961 the indigenous inhabitants of Victoria Division were the Bakweri, Bomboko, Wovea, Isubu, Bakolle, Balong, Efik and Mongo totalling about 25000. There was a mixed non-indigenous population of 60,000 engaged in plantation labour and trade. After the plebiscite, the Bakweri themselves made a very careful study of the voting pattern in their land and come out with a convincing conclusion. In fifteen villages predominantly inhabited by the Bakweri, a total of 6.546 votes were

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<sup>725</sup> Chem.-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", pp. 326-327.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid, p. 329.

<sup>727</sup> The land issue was quite sensitive in the Kumba Division as the Bamileke "invaders" gradually acquired land from the indigenes. The misunderstanding over land culminated in the Bakossi Bamileke war of 1966

<sup>728</sup> Chem.-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p.330

cast at the plebiscite. 5.706 of these votes were for Nigeria and 840 were for Cameroon.

In seven areas, namely villages, cities and towns of the divisions that were predominantly inhabited by the non-Bakweri, a total of 11.185 votes were cast. 3.846 of these were for Nigeria and 7.339 were for Cameroon. In nine plantation areas, inhabited mainly by the non-Bakweri workers, a total of 11.280 votes were cast at the plebiscite, 1.885 of these votes were for Nigeria and 9.392 were for Cameroon. These figures would appear to support the claim of Samuel Endeley and other Bakweri that they did not vote for reunification.<sup>729</sup> (See table 9 below)

In fact in a petition of February 17, 1961 to the UN the Bakweri people under the Bakweri Molongo- cultural society of all Bakweri speaking people, spelt out reasons for their vote for Nigeria. According to them, they feared the domination of the Bakweri by the non-Bakweri people living in the Victoria Division. These non Bakweri who were attracted to the division by the fertility of the Bakweri land and the employment opportunities the plantation provided had developed a “plot” to “deprive” them of their land.

These settlers voted for reunification in Victoria Division in order to seize the Bakweri land and in order to spite and over run the Bakweri.<sup>730</sup> With the voting patterns indicated above and the content of the Bakweri post-plebiscite petitions, it can be concluded that French Cameroonians who were the majority of settlers in the division by 1961 played a key role in the plebiscite by campaigning and voting for reunification.

The relevance of this conclusion can be seen from the complain the KNC Secretary General S.A.Arrey presented to the UN Visiting Mission in 1958. He complained of “a large influx of pressure groups from the French sector of the Cameroons in order to influence the trend of opinions in the British sector”. He went further to inform the UN team that “you will observe, in this connection, when you visit the French sector that the indigenous natives of the British

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<sup>729</sup> Ibid.

<sup>730</sup> Chem-Langhee, “Kamerun Plebiscites”, p.331.

sector have at no time crossed the border in order to interfere in the internal affairs of the French sector”.<sup>731</sup> In this petition, the KNC scribe was already indicating to the UN that the upcoming plebiscite may witness significant French Cameroonian participation.

**Table 9: Bakweri Votes at the 1961 Plebiscite**

| Bakweri Village | Votes for Nigeria | Votes for Cameroon |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Bota            | 356               | 40                 |
| Batoke          | 279               | 121                |
| Bakingili       | 109               | 45                 |
| Bamuso          | 310               | 10                 |
| Bova            | 656               | 17                 |
| Small Soppo     | 299               | 86                 |
| Great Soppo     | 453               | 150                |
| Membea          | 655               | 11                 |
| Bonjongo        | 960               | 69                 |
| Bonabavio       | 165               | 09                 |
| Wokova          | 243               | 10                 |
| Ekona Lelu      | 163               | 01                 |
| Lysoka Natives  | 483               | 63                 |
| Molyko 2        | 276               | 71                 |
| Muca            | 299               | 147                |
|                 |                   |                    |

**Source:** *Cameroons Champion*, vol. 2, no 7, February 15, 1961, p.3

The conclusion can be backed by the declarations of the National Publicity Secretary of the OK, Mr George Mbaraga a few days after the plebiscite. In a press conference which his party organised, he said that; “the KNDP was shaky over unification until the OK as the originators of the idea and generals in the battle came to its rescue

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<sup>731</sup> PAB, file Ba/1958/5, UN Visiting Mission, p.36.

and convinced the leaders of the KNDP for unification”.<sup>732</sup> This declaration by a French Cameroonian reunificationists was certainly correct because for a long time the KNDP laid emphasis more on achieving independence for the Southern Cameroons than on reunification. Again the KNDP electorate and leadership did not hide their hate for reunification even at the eve of the plebiscite.

Again few days after the publication of the plebiscite results, a wave of hooliganism swept across some of the plebiscite districts where indigenes had voted against reunification. In Victoria Division, it was characterised by the hooting of Bakweri, beating of CPNC field secretaries, mocking and booing of Bakweri women and their leaders etc. According to the editor of the *Cameroons Champion*, “these hooligans came fresh from the Republic of Cameroon and forced themselves on the register even against regulations”.<sup>733</sup> If these provocative acts of hooliganism were from French Cameroonians, then they certainly were part of the plebiscite as claimed by the *Cameroon Champion*. They were booing at those who had outrightly rejected reunification. It may therefore sound logical to conclude that if Dr Endeley lost the plebiscite by 75 percent in his Victoria constituency it was partly because French Cameroonians resident in Victoria Division and those who moved in at the eve of the plebiscite voted for reunification

It can therefore be concluded that the 1961 plebiscite was a major event in the political evolution of the Southern Cameroons. It was an opportunity for people to determine their political destiny. The majority choose reunification with the Republic of Cameroon-an option initiated and propagated by French Cameroonians. In the achievement of these results, French Cameroonians played an important role. Their importance was quickly perceived by Dr Emmanuel Endeley who used his authority for frustrate them.

When John Ngu Foncha became Prime Minister in 1959 and when reunification became an undisputed plebiscite alternative, French Cameroonians with the protection or blessing of the Foncha

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<sup>732</sup> *Cameroons Champion*, vol.2, no 7, February 15, 1961, p.2.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid*

regime carried out anti- Nigerian and pro-Cameroon campaigns, throughout the region. Officials from French Cameroon or rather the Republic of Cameroon such as Paul Monthe, Sultan Seidou Njoya, Paul Soppo Priso, President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Douala Yondo provided the reunificationists in the Southern Cameroons with moral, material and financial support overtly or secretly. Several reports also indicated that many people crossed the borders from the Republic of Cameroon at the eve of the plebiscite and voted for reunification. The role of French Cameroonians in the vote for reunification in the 1961 plebiscite was therefore quite instrumental. The collaboration between French Cameroonians and Foncha during the plebiscite certainly influenced the nature of the reunification with the Republic of Cameroon.





### **French Cameroonians and Reunification Negotiations, 1959-1961**

When the plebiscite alternatives were published, the KNDP and the CPNC started negotiating with the Republic of Cameroon and the Federation of Nigeria respectively on what form of political system or union to be adopted. John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo held several meetings before and after the plebiscite during which Ahidjo greatly influenced Foncha's aspirations on the nature of the reunification or the form of union between the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon.

After the plebiscite, the defeated CPNC petitioned the UN and requested the partition of the Southern Cameroons according to plebiscite results. While at the UN, they were influenced by French Cameroonians to 'change their hearts'. This resulted in the participation of nearly all the Southern Cameroons political and opinion leaders in the Bamenda Preliminary Constitutional Conference and the Fomuban Constitutional Conference that negotiated the October 1961 reunification. This chapter examines the role of French Camerounians especially President Ahmadou Ahidjo in the constitutional talks and reveals that the shape or nature of the federation was largely determined by Ahidjo who outmanoeuvred Foncha, the KNDP Government and the CPNC opposition.

#### **A. The Foncha –Ahidjo Reunification Entente**

The first proposal on the nature of reunification between French Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons was advanced by John Ngu Foncha. During a speech in Douala in November 1958, John Ngu Foncha suggested that reunification should be on a federal basis. He proposed that the Federation should have three regions: British Northern Cameroons; British Southern Cameroons and French

Cameroon<sup>734</sup>. The first opportunity for John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo to discuss the modalities for reunification was in March 1959 when they met during a UN session. During the meeting, no real discussion took place because according to John Ngu Foncha, Ahmadou Ahidjo wanted the issue discussed on Cameroonian soil and in a brotherly manner<sup>735</sup>. Foncha's explanation or Ahidjo's excuse may not be correct because by the end of 1958 the idea of reunification between French Cameroon and the Southern Cameroons was not yet a priority to Ahmadou Ahidjo. He was more aware of the problem of cementing the unity of the Northern Cameroons and controlling the southern part of the French Cameroon than he was of the reunification with the Southern Cameroons<sup>736</sup>. This was confirmed by a confidential note from Durand, Delegate to the French High Commissioner in French Cameroon, to his British counterpart E. Haworth dated May 1959. In the letter, Durand revealed that Ahmadou Ahidjo was more concerned "in putting a new country on its feet and (his) intention... is to preserve a properly independent state of the Cameroon outside any union or Federation" and the question of reunification was "not one of urgency"<sup>737</sup>. It should be noted therefore that while Foncha remained committed to the idea of reunification, Ahmadou Ahidjo was not, even as late as October 1959.

However, it should be recalled that in Ahidjo's investiture speech on February 18, 1958, he claimed that reunification was an ardent wish of all Cameroonians-*le rêve ardent de tous les Camerounais*.<sup>738</sup> A few months later he told the Legislative Assembly that immediate steps should be taken to bring about reunification.

Reunification has remained the principal preoccupation of French Cameroonians and they have the immediate intention to open

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<sup>734</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 142.

<sup>735</sup> Frank M stark, "Federation in Cameroon: the Shadow and the Reality" in Ndiva Kofele-Kake, *An African Experiment*, p.105.

<sup>736</sup> J.Ebune, "The Making of the Federal system" in V.J.Ngoh (ed), *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State 1961 -1972*, Limbe, Design House, 2004, p. 48.

<sup>737</sup> Cited in V.J. Ngoh, "John Ngu Foncha and the Reunification Saga", p.342.  
5 NAY, Recueil des discours présidentiels, 1957 Février 1968.

dialogue with their neighbours on reunification. The reconstitution of Cameroon which was arbitrarily divided by treaties in which Cameroonians did not participate is a problem that needed an urgent solution even before the proclamation of independence.<sup>739</sup>

This initial stance in favour of reunification was intended to weaken the UPC and solve one of the issues that rendered his predecessor, Andre-Marie Mbida, unpopular. Ahmadou Ahidjo like the other French Cameroon authorities had mixed feelings on the reunification with Southern Cameroon because, when compared with Nigeria and French Cameroon, the backwardness of development in the Southern Cameroon was striking.<sup>740</sup>

In April 1959, John Ngu Foncha and other Southern Cameroons cabinet ministers met with the Vice Prime Minister of French Cameroon, Michael Njine and Paul Monthe, an economic counsellor at Nkongsamba. John Ngu Foncha reiterated that reunification would take place on a federal basis after the Southern Cameroons secession from Nigeria<sup>741</sup>. After Douala, John Ngu Foncha therefore choose another French Cameroon town to declare his desire for reunification on a federal basis. While at Nkongsamba, arrangements were made for John Ngu Foncha to meet Ahmadou Ahidjo the next month in Yaounde. The May trip to Yaounde, was made to represent the arrival of a potential political partner. He was received by Ahmadou Ahidjo at the airport and he later met the cabinet and spoke to the legislative assembly. On the final day of his three-day visit, he participated in celebrations for the May 10 national holiday<sup>742</sup>. The official communiqué noted that Foncha spoke of a federal union which would pave the way to a complete reunification and assure a harmonious transition. Ahmadou Ahidjo denied any desire to

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<sup>739</sup> NAY, Communication de M Ahmadou Ahidjo, Premier Ministre, Chef du Gouvernement Camerounais, le 18 Octobre 1958 a l'Assemblée Legislative du Cameroun. Yaounde, Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1959, p.21.

<sup>740</sup> See, Chiabi, *The making of Modern Cameroon*, pp.133-220. The author analyses in three chapters(7.8.9.) the backwardness and powerlessness of the Southern Cameroon as a result of its administration as an integral part of Nigeria

<sup>741</sup> Frank M. Stark, "Federalism in Cameroon," P. 105

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

“annex” the Southern Cameroons<sup>743</sup>. This was an indication that Ahidjo accepted the idea of a federal union.

Despite Foncha’s insistence that reunification could only come after the secession of the Southern Cameroons from Nigeria, it is clear that his first two encounters with Ahmadou Ahidjo greatly influenced his opinion on the nature of the reunification. In an address to welcome Ahmadou Ahidjo to Buea on July 18, 1960, Foncha confirmed this opinion when he said;

President Ahidjo first met me in the UN in February 1959 when he went there to finalize the arrangement for the independence of Cameroon. He impressed me by the remarks he made about the question of reunification. He, like myself, said that the unification of Kamerun was a matter for the people of both sectors acting as brothers, and that discussions leading to it were appropriate only on Kamerun soil. Next he impressed me by the invitation he gave me and the rousing reception accorded me during the national day celebration on May 10, 1959. The overwhelming crowd which came out to receive me at Yaounde and later on at Douala was the expression of the spontaneous wish for reunification<sup>744</sup>

It should be recalled that during the reception in Yaounde, Foncha was decorated with the highest order in French Cameroon (the *Commandeur de l'ordre de la valeur Camerounaise*) This was sufficient to moderate him as he negotiated reunification with Ahidjo.

Next, in August 1959, John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo were invited to the first Pan-Cameroon Students’ congress in Yaounde. John Ngu Foncha did not attend the congress. However he sent a message, which indicated his determination to work for secession from Nigeria. The message stated that; “anybody that makes reunification a condition for secession is an enemy working in

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<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release no.907, July 18, 1960.

favour for integration in the Nigerian Federation”<sup>745</sup>. This was an indication that John Ngu Foncha who believed in reunification, knew that secession and integration with Nigeria were more popular options than reunification. However, John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo therefore lost an opportunity to discuss the nature of reunification before the plebiscite and under the influence of the students who were noted for their support for reunification.

In October 1959 John Ngu Foncha and Dr Emmanuel Endeley were pressured by the UN to agree to hold the plebiscite not later than March 1961 in which Southern Cameroonians were to decide to join Nigeria or the Cameroon Republic. When Foncha accepted the plebiscite alternatives, he changed his concept of federation to that of a loose federation. His preference for a loose federation was dictated by the fact that his supporters and some influential KNDP members were against his acceptance of reunification with French Cameroon as one of the plebiscite questions<sup>746</sup>. He had to assure them that reunification would take the form of a loose federation. In this connection when Solomon Tandeng Muna, a member of Foncha’s cabinet, met some members of Ahidjo’s Cabinet on November 25, 1959, the Southern Cameroonian requested a relatively loose federation. A release issued after the meeting stated that:

Without entering into any comment, the Hon Muna expressed a view that unification between the Southern Cameroons might take the form of a loose federation with the aim of preserving the individuality of the Southern Cameroons state, which at the same time would enjoy the advantages of federation with the Republic of Cameroon. He expressed a view that a committee might be established to examine the possibilities of such a federation. His views found favour with the French ministers who it appears had been thinking along similar lines...it was agreed that the union should be a union of brothers from which both sides would draw strength<sup>747</sup>.

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<sup>745</sup> J.Ebune, “The Making of the Federal system”, P. 50

<sup>746</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 132.

<sup>747</sup> Cited in J. Ebune, “The Making of the Federal System,” p.50.

The release added that because of the differences in culture and traditions, the individual nature of the respective territories would have to be preserved. It should be noted that in these negotiations, the representatives of French Cameroon did not give a firm commitment regarding the form federation would take. John Ngu Foncha only later realized that Ahmadou Ahidjo was inflexible in his position on federation and was opposed to confederation or a loose federation.

After the November 25, 1959 meeting between some members of Foncha's and Ahidjo's cabinets, Ahidjo concentrated on preparing for the independence of the new Republic of Cameroon on January 1, 1960 and made no new statement about a federation or even about reunification. Foncha announced several times that Ahidjo's arrival in the Southern Cameroons was imminent but Ahmadou Ahidjo was in no hurry to visit Buea<sup>748</sup>. On May 31, 1960 the UN Trusteeship Council issued Resolution 1012(XXIV) requesting the Administering Authority, the United Kingdom, to take appropriate steps to ensure that the people of the Southern Cameroons were fully informed, before the plebiscite, of the constitutional arrangements that would have to be made for the implementation of the decisions at the plebiscite<sup>749</sup>. In the execution of this resolution, Her Majesty's Government urged that negotiations on the arrangement for reunification with Republic of Cameroon should be undertaken before the plebiscite date was announced.

It was in these circumstances that John Ngu Foncha successfully convinced Ahmadou Ahidjo to visit Buea in July 1960. In his reception speech on July 16, 1960, John Ngu Foncha declared that.

The main purpose of this short visit of our august visitors from the Republic of Cameroon is to confer with me and my ministerial colleagues on what the people of the British Cameroons should have should they vote for the second alternative to be put to them at the forth-coming plebiscite.... All that we shall pronounce after our meeting will be an outline of what the setup of the United Kamerun

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<sup>748</sup> Frank, M, Stark, "Federalism in Cameroon," p. 107.

<sup>749</sup> Nghoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.135.

government will look like. Details will be a matter for future meetings<sup>750</sup>.

True to Foncha's declaration, the Buea meeting did not produce a draft constitution for a would be United Cameroon as many observers and the Administering Authority expected. They however agreed to unify on a federal basis adaptable to conditions peculiar to all sections of Cameroon. They also decided to set up a joint committee to study the various constitutional proposals that may result from reunification. Finally they resolved that a conference to represent all sections of the Cameroons be held at a later date to examine the proposals of the joint committee<sup>751</sup>.

A close look at the outcome of this meeting and its prolongation in Yaoundé, August 9 to 14, 1960, reveals that Ahmadou Ahidjo did not commit himself to any clause that might be binding on him or the Republic of Cameroon. In a speech to the Victoria population after the Buea meeting, Ahidjo only indicated that reunification would be the outcome of intense negotiations between two equal parties. He stated vaguely that *"nous avons prévu une forme souple, une forme fédérale, qui puisse rendre cette reunification viable et utile"*<sup>752</sup> This was disturbing to the KNDP militants given that they were inclining towards the plebiscite date and that the CPNC had spelt out its terms concerning associations between the Southern Cameroons and the Federation of Nigeria.

The campaign pressures and the administering authority finally compelled John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo to spell out the terms of reunification. After a series of meetings in Yaounde held between John Ngu Foncha and President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Prime Minister Charles Assale between October 10 and 14, 1960, a joint communiqué dated October 14, 1960 was issued. According to the communiqué Foncha and Ahidjo agreed to form a federal state with the following "minimum powers" allocated to it "in the first stage"; Public freedoms, nationality, national defence, foreign affairs,

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<sup>750</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 113.

<sup>751</sup> NAB, Southern Cameroons Press Release no 909, 18 July 1960, p. 11.

<sup>752</sup> Recueil des discours présidentiels 1957 février 1968, p.115

higher education, immigration and emigration, federal budget and posts and telecommunications<sup>753</sup>. The federal state would have a federal executive, which would be headed by a president; a federal legislative Assembly; and a federal senate. In addition, each of the two federated states would have a government with its own legislature and each would have exclusive competence in non-federal matters<sup>754</sup>.

The October 14, 1960 communiqué also explained that some federal laws would only be enacted in such a way that no measure contrary to the interest of one state would be imposed upon it by the majority. Furthermore, Ahmadou Ahidjo and John Ngu Foncha agreed that in no case would the United Cameroon be a part of the French or British Common wealth<sup>755</sup>.

In committing himself to the October communiqué, John Ngu Foncha conceded to Ahmadou Ahidjo what he, the majority of the KNDP leadership and many Southern Cameroonians did not want – a federation. John Ngu Foncha, it should be recalled, had earlier at the UN in 1959, said that negotiations for possible union with the French Cameroon could not be properly undertaken until the Southern Cameroons had achieved independence on its own. According to him “separation will keep the door open for the building up of a greater Cameroon nation. Federation will close it. It is nothing short of treason that anyone for selfish motives should want his country to be engulfed by another.” He said Britain since 1953 had made considerable efforts to finance important development schemes in the Southern Cameroons that were now nearing completion and any abrupt decision might bring these development schemes to a standstill<sup>756</sup>. If John Ngu Foncha went ahead to negotiate, it was because he was dominated and outwitted by Ahmadou Ahidjo and he failed to promote the position of the KNDP, which was a confederation or loose federation. Therefore,

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<sup>753</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.123.

<sup>754</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.141.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid.

<sup>756</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release no.485, September, 1959.



Foncha's subsequent request for a very loose federation at the Bamenda All Party Constitutional Conference of June 1961 and at the Fouban Conference of July 1961 was merely to impress on his supporters and the CPNC opponents who finally accepted reunification.

Although Ahmadou Ahidjo accepted in the October 1960 communiqué that the reunified Cameroon would not be part of either the French community or the British Common wealth, he signed a series of cooperation agreements and treaties with France in November 1960, which directly tied the Republic of Cameroon to France<sup>757</sup>. By these accords, the Republic of Cameroon tacitly joined the French community. Ahmadou Ahidjo therefore deceived John Ngu Foncha to abandon the British common wealth when he intended to move closer to France. It can therefore be concluded that the Foncha-Ahidjo reunification entente and especially the October 1960 communiqué clearly sealed the fate of Southern Cameroonians in favour of a strongly centralized federation. It also demonstrated the influence Ahmadou Ahidjo had over John Ngu Foncha and the role French Cameroonians continued to play in shaping the destiny of the Southern Cameroons.

On the eve of the plebiscite therefore, there was no constitutional proposal for the United Cameroon as was the case with the CPNC that already had the terms of the union with Nigeria well spelled out in detail. The so-called October 1960 communiqué signed by John Ngu Foncha, Ahidjo and Charles Assale was too vague on the provisions for the union between the two Cameroons. Ahmadou Ahidjo was in no hurry to specify the precise terms for the

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<sup>757</sup> The Franco-Cameroon Accord of November 1960 involved ten treaties which were: a diplomatic convention; a cooperative agreement on economic, financial and monetary matters; a convention regulation relations between the French and Cameroon treasuries; a cooperation agreement on matters of civil aviation; aerial navigation, air bases and meteorology; an agreement on military technical assistance; a convention on the role and status of the French military mission in Cameroon; a cultural convention; a consular convention; and a legal convention. The accords were ratified by France by law no 01435 of December 27, 1960 and by the republic of Cameroon by law no 60 -78 of December 30, 1960.

administration of a new federal republic in the event of the voters of the Southern Cameroons choosing reunification with Cameroon. He himself was a Muslim from the north of the Republic of Cameroon and his core supporters were drawn from the same region. From his point of view the Southern Cameroons, with its majority of Christian and pagan voters might well turn out to be a political liability. In fact, Ahidjo would probably have been quite happy to see the Southern Cameroons united with Nigeria. What he really wanted was union with the largely Muslim Northern Cameroons, which was holding its own plebiscite at the same time<sup>758</sup>.

Besides, Ahmadou Ahidjo certainly knew that throughout 1960, there was widespread opposition in the Southern Cameroons to the questions proposed for the plebiscite. This was demonstrated to the Plebiscite Officials who undertook in September 1960 a campaign to inform the people about the alternatives. The majority of the people strongly condemned the two alternatives and demanded secession<sup>759</sup>. With this opposition to reunification, Ahmadou Ahidjo could not immediately provoke the people with a constitutional proposal that contradicted Foncha's promises.

Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic gave Ahmadou Ahidjo enormous powers and, as in most former French colonies, his government was highly centralized. It was therefore unlikely that he should choose to weaken his own constitutional position by deferring to the wishes of the Prime Minister of a much smaller territory that offered him few political or economic advantages and which might or might not choose to merge with his own. Ahidjo was simply playing a waiting game and was able to outmanoeuvre or bribe John Ngu Foncha to play along with him. This was done by adding to his package of persuasive undertakings, a number of secret promises regarding Foncha's and Muna's future.

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<sup>758</sup> Percival, *1961 Cameroon plebiscite*, p.76.

<sup>759</sup> Malcolm Milne, *No telephone to Heaven: From Apex to Nadir-Colonial Service in Nigeria, Aden, the Cameroons and the Gold Coast, 1938-1961*, Lancaster, Meon Hill Press, 1999, p.400.

Ahidjo's delay tactics during the constitutional talks did influence the outcome of the plebiscite. As John Percival one of the plebiscite officials explains, the Second Public Enlightenment Campaign was confusing because the booklet specially prepared for the purpose, called *The Two Alternatives* was vague and lopsided<sup>760</sup>. Published probably in November 1960, the publisher was not stated [on the booklet was simply stated Printed by Authority] and the electorate could not disassociate the British officials from this document since they dominated the core of plebiscite officials. It was lopsided because the consequences of joining Nigeria and the terms of union with Nigeria described in *The Two Alternatives* were clear and detailed while the implications of joining the Republic of Cameroon were not clear either in the preamble or in the text that followed<sup>761</sup>. The vague nature of the terms of union with the Republic and the lopsided nature of the document made it difficult for *The two Alternatives* to be used by the Second Public Enlightenment Campaign officials as a bible. Whenever the officials educated the public on the precise legal, educational and civil service issues in the enlarged federation of Nigeria and could only say that these issues would be decided after reunification in an enlarged Cameroon, the suspicious members of the audience concluded that they were favouring Nigeria and refusing to disclose the arrangements for the Republic<sup>762</sup>. This disdain for British plebiscite officials caused by Ahidjo's reluctance to provide them with concrete terms of reunification as did the Nigerian officials made many Southern Cameroons to sanction them through a vote for reunification.

## **B. Beybey Eyidi, Ahidjo and the CPNC 'Last Battle'**

When the plebiscite results were announced, there was blind rejoicing within the ranks of the KNDP and OK and a dreadful chill amongst the pro-Nigerian elements especially the CPNC militants.

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<sup>760</sup> Percival, *1961 Cameroon plebiscite*, p. 74.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid, p.75.

<sup>762</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

The CPNC immediately put forward its idea of how the plebiscite results were to be interpreted given that the UN had not defined the details on how the results were to be interpreted. The CNPC demanded that in the interpretation of the plebiscite results, the most authentic body to consult in the final analysis was the ethnic group or unit or kingdom and not an artificial creation of the Whiteman named Cameroon<sup>763</sup>. The CPNC stated clearly that;

In our opinion, the tribe or clan constituted that unit, and it must be that unit that the UN was to use in the final interpretation of the results. If any tribe indicated by majority where it wished to be, there it was to be allowed to go. If the effect of that choice was to last a thousand years, then that ethnic group would have chosen its destiny by itself<sup>764</sup>.

The CPNC therefore wanted the UN to partition the Southern Cameroons on ethnic lines with the ethnic groups that voted for integration with Nigeria, joining Nigeria. In fact Dr Emmanuel Endeley and the CPNC started the plebiscite campaign with this statement:

...in the event of a vote in favour of the Cameroon Republic, the CPNC... will request unconditionally that the UN partition the territory between the group of persons desiring a union with the independent Federation and those seeking a union with the Cameroon Republic.<sup>765</sup>

Another CPNC campaign poster portrayed the UN soldiers splitting the Cameroons with a machete which meant that if Southern Cameroonians voted foolishly at the plebiscite, their territory would be divided in to pieces. These were clear indicators that the CPNC was to recommend the partition of the Southern Cameroons if the plebiscite results were not in favour of integration with Nigeria.

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<sup>763</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p. 156.

<sup>764</sup> Ibid.

<sup>765</sup> Chem-Langhëë, "Kamerun Plebiscites", p.274.

These recommendations were made by the pro-CPNC ethnic groups at the end of the plebiscite.

Kumba Division the home of Nerijs Namaso Mbile the deputy leader of CPNC where many ethnic groups voted for integration with Nigeria complained most after the plebiscite. Kumba Division was the largest administrative unit in the Southern Cameroons and had a significant boundary with Nigeria on the west, and a more extensive boundary with Cameroon Republic on the east. On March 4, 1961 the *Mwane –Ngoe* Union<sup>766</sup> a union of all the Bakossi people petitioned the UN arguing that “tribal sentiments rather than a clear understanding of the issues at stake had greatly influenced the voting at the recent plebiscite in favour of the second alternatives”. According to them the plebiscite was fraught with discontent, rancour, bitterness, and terrorism while the proposed vague political experiment of reunification with the Cameroon Republic was threatened by instability. They called on the UN “to make all appropriate arrangements whereby the Bakossi people would be administered ...with the independent federation of Nigeria”<sup>766</sup>.

The Bakundu people’s convention in a petition to the UN in February 1961 indicated that, “justice would not be made if some ethnic groups were allowed to decide for others because of their superior numbers.” The Bakundu petitioners went further to declare that they would never acquiesce in reunification and they were prepared to fight against it to the last man<sup>767</sup>. The Bafaw youths Association, on March 21, 1961, called on the UN to place Bafaw within Nigeria while the Balondo invited the UN to partition Southern Cameroons between those who voted for Cameroon and those how voted for Nigeria. The Bakweri as an ethnic group voted for Nigeria and the Bakweri *Molongo* (a cultural society of the Bakweri people) petitioned the UN indicating that the Bakweri voted for Nigeria because the Nigerian constitution protected minorities like

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<sup>766</sup> Cited in Chem-Langhëë, “Kamerun plebiscites”, p.327

<sup>767</sup> Ibid, p. 328.

them. The Bakweri petition called on the UN to immediately partition the Southern Cameroons<sup>768</sup>.

With these interpretations of the plebiscite results and the many petitions from Pro-CPNC ethnic groups, the CPNC sent a delegation to the UN for the 'last battle' in April 1961. The delegation led by Dr Emmanuel Endeley included Nerius Namaso Mbile, Barrister Samuel M.L. Endeley, E.K Martin, Chief Sakwe –Bokwe Ajebe-sone and Rev. Ando Seh<sup>769</sup>. The CPNC literally stormed the UN Trusteeship Council as speaker after speaker called on the partition of the Southern Cameroons between those in favour of continued association with Nigeria on one hand and those for reunification with the Republic of Cameroon on the other hand.

The most threatening and ardently tribalistic presentation to the committee was made by Nerius Namaso Mbile, who claimed that his people were irrevocably decided never to accept union with the Cameroon Republic<sup>770</sup>. Many delegates at the UN appealed to the CPNC delegation to avoid the further fragmentations of Cameroon. According to Nerius Namaso Mbile who was deputy leader of the CPNC delegation and the man who made the most threatening presentation, the voice of Dr Beybey Eyidi from the Republic of Cameroon particularly torched the hearts of most of the CPCN delegates who listened to his mature and philosophical discussion of the problem<sup>771</sup>.

Born on November 21, 1914 in Douala, Dr Beybey Eyidi was educated at the Yaounde Primary School and the *Ecole Préparatoire de Médecine* in Joss. He finished his medical studies in Paris in 1950. During the Second World War he served in the medical sections of the Free French forces and from 1951 to 1955 practiced in the Government medical services in France and Cameroon. He served as medical advisor to Louis-Paul Aujoulat from 1954 to 1955. In 1956

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<sup>768</sup> Ibid, p. 331.

<sup>769</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p. 156. According to Mible each ethnic group constituting the CPNC backbone was to raise the cost for one delegate to the UN, while the CPNC was to pay for its leaders and deputy.

<sup>770</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.166.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid, p. 161.

he opened a clinic in Douala and became active in oppositional politics. In 1960 he was elected to represent the Wouri constituency in the National Assembly. It was this French Cameroon (Duala) reunificationist who appeared at the UN several times as a petitioner between 1957 and 1961 who wooed the CPNC in 1961 to accept the plebiscite results.

Dr Beybey Eyidi saw the strength of the CPNC arguments in favour of the partition of the Southern Cameroons according to the plebiscite results of the various ethnic groups but

Felt that all Cameroonians should accept our coming together even as a beginning in the building of a great Cameroon nation for our posterity.... He appealed to all to accept the challenge of reunification notwithstanding positions held in the past<sup>772</sup>.

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<sup>772</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p.161.

**Plate 10: Dr. M. Beybey Eyidi**



**Source:** Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p.221

The conciliatory voice of Dr Beybey Eyidi served to remind the CPNC men that all may not be fire-eating east of the river Mungo<sup>773</sup>. Dr Beybey Eyidi provided a brotherly answer to the worries of the defeated CPNC. He made them to understand that French Cameroon was not “fire” as was described by Achirimbi the chairman of the Southern Cameroons Chiefs Conference in 1958.

Following the moving voice of Dr Bebey Eyidi and appeals from UN representatives for all Southern Cameroonians to sink their differences, a joint meeting was held in one of the committee rooms of the UN between representatives of the KNDP (Foncha and Muna) and the CPNC delegation with E.K Martin presiding<sup>774</sup>. Nerius Namaso Mbile summaries the outcome of the meeting as follows

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<sup>773</sup>Ibid, p.162

<sup>774</sup> Ibid.



1. We declared a truce in political war, calling on all our members to refrain from any provocative acts and utterances
2. We agreed to forget the past and work together towards the achievement of a happy and prosperous Cameroon nation.
3. We were to return home together, received by our supporters at a join reception at Tiko airport.
4. There was to be no claim of victory or defeat by any side
5. On our arrival at Tiko, crowds of both groups were to be told that they had come to receive a united Cameroon team returning home<sup>775</sup>.

Thanks therefore to Dr Beybey Eyidi and the appeals from the distinguished ambassadors at the UN, the CPNC accepted reunification and abandoned their request for the balkanization of the Southern Cameroons and threats to fight against reunification to the last man. French Cameroonians therefore contributed to the unity and political stability that reigned in the Southern Cameroons after the plebiscite.

The influence of Dr Beybey Eyidi had on the CPNC delegation at the UN was quite significant. The first demonstration of new found unity was the return of the two delegations from the UN together. When they arrived the Tiko airport, no delegation chanted victory songs or otherwise. Two speakers, one from each group told the crowd that “we have come back to face the grim future together” and according to Nerius Namaso Mbile, they returned home resolved to “make reunification work.”<sup>776</sup>

The Tiko declarations were followed by a joint open air rally in the Buea market place where leaders from both parties were present and addressed the people on the new spirit of unity in reunification. Despite the rain on that day, the crowd that attended the rally was quite large and heterogeneous composed of reunificationists, autonomists and integrationists. The crowd was also composed of

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<sup>775</sup> Ibid.

<sup>776</sup> Ibid, p.163.

French and British Cameroonians. When Foncha was speaking, Mbile held an umbrella over his head.<sup>777</sup> This was a scenario that was uncommon during the plebiscite campaigns. It was an indication that things had really changed. The result was the presence of most political and opinion leaders at the constitutional conferences in Bamenda and Foumban as they maintained a united front in drawing up a constitution for a United Cameroon.

Apart from the CPNC's case against the KNDP victory, other attacks on the KNDP were made by individual Southern Cameroonians who were dissatisfied with that party's victory. To most of them the choice of union with the French Cameroon was a wrong one. They suggested that the interest of the Southern Cameroonians would not be given proper attention as would have been the case if the Southern Cameroons opted to join Nigeria. These opponents of reunification used the press to preach division and hatred amongst Cameroonians.

The first personality to attack was Chief K. Lyonga of Soppo Wovila, President of the Bakweri Molongo. In a press release which he published in the *Cameroons Champion* of February 15, 1961 titled "I am Satisfied", he said;

I wish to praise and congratulate all Bakweri at home and at work for the way they voted during the last plebiscite of the Southern Cameroons. Their votes clearly indicated they do not like unification. The votes of strangers on our Division cannot bind us to a course we do not accept.

He went on to say that at a time like this "it is imperative for all Bakweri to stand firm, myself as president of the Bakweri Molongo and the Bakweri Assembly men are prepared to provide the dynamic leadership necessary to thwart domination from strangers on our land. I call on all Bakweri therefore to provide the militant followership necessary for a successful defiance against domination from other tribes"<sup>778</sup>.

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<sup>777</sup>Ibid.

<sup>778</sup> *Cameroon Champion*, February 15, 1961, p.1.

This was a call for a rebellion or resistance against reunification. It was also a threat to the stability and security of the territory.

In the same edition of *Cameroon Champion*, Motomby-Woleta also stated that “the natives of Victoria clearly registered their hatred for unification, in no equivocal terms”. He went further to ask John Ngu Foncha the following question; “If Ibo domination is not good for Cameroonians, should Grassfield domination be good for the Bakweri?”<sup>779</sup> These were manifestation of discontent and it needed an astute leader to handle the situation at the eve of the reunification of the two Cameroons in October 1961.

Still the editorial of *Cameroons champion*, one of the very first newspapers to be published in the Southern Cameroons, of March 11, 1961 titled, “votes do not build a nation” stated that;

The voting has been done and the preliminary results are out but what have we accomplished? So far each nation or tribal group has indicated by its votes where it wished to be, and that is all that has yet been achieved and anyone who thinks a great nation has been built by votes is living in a fool’s paradise. Has it ever occurred to Mr. Foncha that each tribal group is a nation by its self with its own historical background and culture different from the others? Has it ever occurred to Mr. Foncha that the art of nation-building cannot be imposed from the top that it has to start from the bottom? Men make a nation and not vice versa. Where is the Foncha’s talk of Cameroon nation? Will the wild votes of the Bamenda men forge a Cameroon nation... Lumumba tried to forge an artificial Congo nation and failed. Let Foncha learn from other people’s mistakes and will be fortified to face the future with confidence<sup>780</sup>

In the same newspaper, and the same issue of March 11, 1961, another article written by P.N. Motomby Woleta accused John Ngu Foncha of failing to translate his victory ‘into the full realization of

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<sup>779</sup> Ibid, p.3

<sup>780</sup> *Cameroon Champion*, March 11, 1961, p.1.

concrete objectives of human struggle”.<sup>781</sup> These newspaper publications portrayed an unhealthy political atmosphere in the Southern Cameroons, as many believed that the future of the country was uncertain. Ahmadou Ahidjo again intervened promptly by visiting Buea in May 1961.

During the visit, President Ahmadou Ahidjo sprang all a huge surprise by inviting Dr Emmanuel Endeley, Nerus Namaso Mbile and other CPNC leaders to the Schloss (the Schloss was the residence of the German Governor of Kamerun which later became the Prime Minister’s Residence) whereby he assure them that despite the views they had held, he harboured no bitterness against them and that the task of nation building which lay ahead, was the concern of all Cameroonians<sup>782</sup>. This was magnanimity in victory and a clear demonstration that Ahmadou Ahidjo was ready to welcome even the opponents of reunification. Reunification though dreaded by Dr Emmanuel Endeley, Nerus Namaso Mbile and their CPNC followers gradually appeared comforting. As such they decided to join the negotiators at the various constitutional talks in efforts at reunification.

### **C. Towards a Federal Constitution**

The “United Cameroon team” that returned from the UN determined to effect reunification with the Republic of Cameroon had an important task to accomplish. This task was to propose a draft constitution for the new state. The aspirations of the majority of Southern Cameroonians who supported the KNDP in the 1961 plebiscite centred on a Confederation or a loose Federation of the two autonomous states under a ceremonial President of the Federation. John Ngu Foncha carefully ruled out the participation of the UN and Britain from drawing up the constitution. He was possibly cajoled by Ahmadou Ahidjo to regard the post-plebiscite constitution as an internal affair of the people themselves. Foncha

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<sup>781</sup> Ibid, p.3.

<sup>782</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*. p. 267.

later stated that “the drawing up of this constitution is a matter for Cameroonians themselves and it will be foolish to look to anyone else for help”<sup>783</sup>. He also stated clearly that it was no longer necessary to refer the matter to the UN ...”since the president of the Republic of Cameroon had given his endorsement.... to the idea of a federation and a post –plebiscite constitutional conference”<sup>784</sup>. Foncha therefore began constitutional negotiations with Ahmadou Ahidjo, signed a number of communiqués with him, and produced a draft constitution without seeking UN or British technical advice. Also he did not, until too late consult the opposition CPNC which had experienced politician like Dr Emmanuel Endeley, Nerus Namaso Mbile and Motomby Woleta<sup>785</sup>. The constitution that was finally adopted for the Union between the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon was largely the product of Ahidjo influence and constant cajoling of Foncha.

The joint-communiqué signed by Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo notwithstanding, Ahmadou Ahidjo also wanted to do everything to exclude the UN and Britain from participating in drawing up the constitution. Ahmadou Ahidjo finally succeeded by exploiting the naivety of John Ngu Foncha and convincing him to see the constitution as an internal issue requiring no external assistance. Ahmadou Ahidjo therefore avoided all attempts by British officials to discuss the constitution of the re-unified Cameroon. For example, a month after the plebiscite, the Colonial Office requested to hold talks with Ahmadou Ahidjo but Ahidjo delegated his Foreign Minister, Charles Okala. The minister took along three senior personnel of his ministry while Britain was represented at the meeting by the Ambassador in Yaounde and some of his staff and by the assistant under-secretary of state in the Colonial Office. From the Southern Cameroons were the Commissioner, the assistant secretary to the

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<sup>783</sup> Ibid.

<sup>784</sup> Cited in Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.254.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid, p. 253.

government, John Ngu Foncha, Augustine Ngom Jua, and Solomon Tandeng Muna.<sup>786</sup>

Throughout the meeting on March 8 and 9, 1961 Charles Okala avoided any constitutional compromise with the British. He advocated that the Southern Cameroons should immediately sever all connections with Nigeria and promised to supply the territory with personnel to fill the gap left by Nigerians. He also expressed the hope that Britain will do everything to ensure political stability before reunification took place.<sup>787</sup> Britain therefore failed to impose a constitution on Ahmadou Ahidjo.<sup>788</sup> Instead Charles Okala took advantage of the British sponsored meeting to assure John Ngu Foncha that the departure of Nigerians would not create any vacuum in the territory and to get Britain maintain peace in the territory. With the British eliminated or ignored by both John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo, the Ahidjo-Foncha constitutional talks started.

Post-plebiscite constitutional talks started in Buea when Ahmadou Ahidjo visited the Southern Cameroons from June 14 to 17, 1961. The aim of the visit was to enable the two leaders to iron out important issues before the constitutional talks in Foumban<sup>789</sup>. At the meeting John Ngu Foncha wanted to ensure that any future Cameroon federation would guarantee the *status quo ante* of the Southern Cameroons which in effect, meant the retention of its monetary, educational, judicial and administrative system as well as its Legislative and police powers<sup>790</sup>. John Ngu Foncha also favoured a

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<sup>786</sup> Ibid, p.250.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid .

<sup>788</sup> Many authors blame Britain rather than Ahidjo for this failure. They claim that Britain displayed a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the Southern Cameroons throughout the critical period in the history of the territory. To them, Britain should have prepared the Southern Cameroons for reunification with the same sense of purpose as it did in preparing the territory for integration with Nigeria. In fact, Britain should have insisted on the details of the constitution for reunification before the plebiscite, even if it meant delaying the plebiscite by some months or even a year. This judgement is unfair because Ahidjo and Foncha did everything to avoid the British.

<sup>789</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 138.

<sup>790</sup> Ngho, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 154

Southern Cameroons military force. In his proposal, it was apparent that the federation should be given only the reserved powers, which were, at the time, exercised by the administering authority through the commissioner for the Cameroons. Ahmadou Ahidjo and his entourage had serious reservations on Foncha's positions and it was probably during this June 1961 meeting that Ahmadou Ahidjo handed to John Ngu Foncha a draft constitution for the federation<sup>791</sup>.

The content of Ahmadou Ahidjo draft constitution for the federation was certainly responsible for Foncha's abrupt convocation of Southern Cameroons political leaders to the Bamenda Preliminary Constitutional Conference, which held for five days from June 26<sup>th</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1961. Although 51 members, representing all shades of political opinion in the territory attended the conference, delegates were not given enough time to prepare and had no concrete proposals for discussion<sup>792</sup>.

Although Foncha's KNDP held a meeting to prepare itself for the Bamenda conference, he did not find it prudent to inform the other political parties to make similar preparations because he knew that their aspirations could not be satisfied by Ahidjo's draft constitution. Even the OK party, which was the uncompromising advocate of immediate reunification, had nothing to offer. Ndeh Ntumazah and Albert Mukong, who represented the party, went to the conference without any constitutional proposals and were therefore given some hours to produce something<sup>793</sup>.

Similarly, it was also during the conference that the CPNC representatives produced a memorandum. Foncha had therefore summoned the political class to Bamenda in June 1961 knowing quite well that they were not prepared for serious constitutional work and as Chief S.T. Galabe, representative of the Bali District council regretted; "delegates had just to follow very closely the proposals of the KNDP"<sup>794</sup>. John Ngu Foncha had realized that Ahmadou Ahidjo

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<sup>791</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.170

<sup>792</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, P.255

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid.

draft constitution did not satisfy the aspirations of Southern Cameroonians.

However, at Bamenda, delegates called for a loose federation or a confederation that could maintain the distinctive features of the Southern Cameroons. The loose federation formula allayed the fears of the doubting Southern Cameroonians about the adsorption of their state and people in the reunified Cameroon. Under this system they felt they still had the chance to preserve their much valued British heritage and at the same time pursue Southern Cameroon's specific needs for independently attracting foreign aid for development.

They also discussed the powers of the president, the separation of powers, education, and the judiciary, the site of the federal capital, the official languages and the nationality of the citizens. Neries Namaso Mbile wanted the right of secession to be included in the constitution, but Foncha thought this would frighten the people of the Cameroon Republic<sup>795</sup>.

The constitutional proposals made at the Bamenda conference were diametrically opposed to what Ahmadou Ahidjo had imposed on John Ngu Foncha during their several meetings, especially in October 1960<sup>796</sup>. Ahmadou Ahidjo wanted a federation with powers vested at the centre or a strongly centralized federation with weak federal states.

This Southern Cameroons variance with Ahidjo's concept of federation could be blamed on John Ngu Foncha who some authorities believe secretly received a copy of the proposed federal constitution from Ahmadou Ahidjo and concealed it from the delegates. Foncha feared revelation of the disparities between the type of system proposed by Ahmadou Ahidjo and that promised in the KNDP plebiscite propaganda might be politically costly at a time when he needed to speak from a position of strength. It was also possible that Ahidjo's draft constitution could provoke the opposition party to revive their demands for the partition of the

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<sup>795</sup> Ibid, p. 256.

<sup>796</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.155.



Southern Cameroons<sup>797</sup>. If John Ngu Foncha had revealed the content of his constitutional agreements with Ahidjo, which were radically different from the expectations of the people, pro-Nigerian activists might have blown things up and a political crisis could arise<sup>798</sup>. In Muna's view, Foncha's refusal to present the proposal at the Bamenda conference was because Foncha was afraid that the opposition would sabotage the conference and derail the constitutional process in the territory<sup>799</sup>. The delegates at the Bamenda Constitutional Conference were therefore making and adopting proposals, which were contrary to what Ahidjo had cajoled Foncha to accept. The Southern Cameroons delegates therefore went to Foumban in July 1961 handicapped by the Ahidjo-Foncha secret negotiations and as Frank Stark puts it, "Foncha led the Southern Cameroons delegation to the Foumban conference like lambs to the slaughter"<sup>800</sup>.

#### **D. The Final Constitution**

The Foumban conference which was summoned to write the final constitution opened on Monday, July 17, 1961 and ended on July 21, 1961. It was attended by 25 delegates from the Southern Cameroons led by John Ngu Foncha and 12 delegates from the Republic of Cameroon led by Ahmadou Ahidjo<sup>801</sup>. The delegation from the Southern Cameroons included George Mbaraga a French Cameroonian who was one of the OK representatives.<sup>802</sup> The organization, procedure and events of the conference were all fashioned by French Cameroonians to woo or cajole the Southern

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<sup>797</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.170.

<sup>798</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 141.

<sup>799</sup> Ngho, *Southern Cameroons*, p.165.

<sup>800</sup> Frank M. Stark, "Federalism in Cameroon", p. 101.

<sup>801</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.183.

<sup>802</sup> Buboh E. Tamange, *The OK in Southern Cameroon Politics, 1956-1966*, B. A. Long Essay, University of Buea, 1996, p.25. In his Autobiography, Ndeh Ntumazah claim that he delegated George Mbaraga because Ernest Ouandie had warned him of Ahidjo's plans to assassinate him at the Foumban Conference.

Cameroon's delegation to adopt what Ahmadou Ahidjo and his French experts had already produced as a constitution for the reunified Cameroon.

Preparations for the conference started on March 3, 1961 when Foncha visited Yaounde to brief Ahmadou Ahidjo on the outcome of the plebiscite of February 11 and 12, 1961. During that visit, the Sultan of Foumban, Seidou Njoya was one of the very few dignitaries who were at the airport to welcome Foncha.<sup>803</sup> Ahmadou Ahidjo, John Ngu Foncha and the Sultan certainly agreed on Foumban hosting the constitutional conference.

Five weeks later, precisely between April 11 and 13, 1961, Ahmadou Ahidjo received in his palace, one after the other, Njoya Arouna, and Sultan Seidou Njoya. The guidelines of the proposed constitutional conference were certainly discussed during the behind-the-scenes meeting of this trio-Ahidjo-Seidou-Arouna. In fact, soon after that meeting, Ahmadou Ahidjo sent strict instructions to the administrative authorities in the Bamoun country about the big projected event<sup>804</sup>.

In the first place, the choice of the city of Foumban by Ahmadou Ahidjo was influenced by the ethnic relations between the two Cameroons and the friendly relations between Sultan Njoya Seidou Njimouluh and John Ngu Foncha<sup>805</sup>. The ethnic relations were revisited and renewed when the Sultan received a delegation from Sehm Atar (Fon of Nso) in May 1958<sup>806</sup>. The delegation came to make peace with Njoya and his people over a dispute which had been in existence since the end of the nineteenth century. The misunderstanding resulted from the beheading of Nsangu the then Bamoun chief during the Nso-Bamoun war of 1885-1888. It should also be recalled that Njoya came to Bamenda in April 1959 to welcome P.M. John Ngu Foncha during his maiden tour of the

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<sup>803</sup> Germanus Doungue, "The Deception of Foumban", *Africa Today*, March 7, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid.

<sup>805</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p. 157.

<sup>806</sup> PAB, file NW/sa/d 1957/1, Southern Cameroons Monthly News Bulletin, p.76.

Southern Cameroons. He came along with a retinue of about 200 men<sup>807</sup>.

Ahidjo therefore wanted to exploit the camaraderie that existed among the grassland leaders and the popularity of Sultan Seidou Njoya as a reunificationist and someone viewed as a paternal figurehead by the Bamenda grassland notables, to impose a centralized federation on the Southern Cameroons<sup>808</sup>. During the conference, John Ngu Foncha also paid special tribute to the Sultan for the role he played in the reunification movement. With such a nationalist or reunificationist as host of the constitutional conference, the Southern Cameroons delegation could not delay deliberations by insisting on a loose federation. Ahmadou Ahidjo was aware of all these trappings in the relationship between the Sultan and his august guests.

Sultan Seidou Njimoluh Njoya's commitment to the reunification struggle was not only appreciated by John Ngu Foncha and needs to be explained. Born in 1902, Njimoluh Njoya was one of the 177 children of Sultan Ibrahim Njoya who died in exile in Yaounde in 1933 following a conflict with the French. Educated in French and English and the *Sbu Mon* script developed by his father, he became king of the Bamum and Sultan of Foumban through an agreement between the French and Bamum notables in June 1933. Njoya later served on the legislative and national assemblies of Cameroon between 1947 and 1960.<sup>809</sup> Between 1947 and 1952 he was member of the Representative Assembly of Cameroon and later member of the Territorial Assembly of Cameroon between 1952 and 1956 and member of the Legislative Assembly from December 1956 to April 1960.

With this background and experience Njoya was a convinced reunificationist because of the fraternal relations between his people and the Nso Fondom and other Chiefdoms in the Southern

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<sup>807</sup> Johnson, *Cameroon Federation*, p.45.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.

<sup>809</sup> V.B.Amaazee, *Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Yaounde, Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2002. p.annex vii.

Cameroons. More importantly, reunification could permit Njoya to reunite with and regain authority over the thousands of Bamum refugees who escaped to the Southern Cameroons (many of these refugees were members of the Bamum royal family) following French persecutions and humiliation of Ibrahim Njoya their political and spiritual leader during the interwar years.

His desire for reunification was also in line with his father's request for British influence in his Kingdom in a letter to the King of England in 1916. It was this Njoya's connection with the Southern Cameroons and his familiarity with the English Language that made him an overt reunificationist.

Even though Foumban was a calm, sunny and beautiful town where Ahmadou Ahidjo used to go for relaxation because of his twin friendship between Sultan Seidou and Arouna Njoya, the security situation in the region was not the best. In the two weeks leading to the Foumban Conference, it was reported that more than one hundred people had been killed by terrorists in Loum, Bafang, Ndom and Douala. The echoes of these killings rapidly spread across the Mungo and seriously worried a large number of reunificationists.

In that climate of high insecurity in the country, Ahidjo was very much worried about how to reassure the leaders of the Southern Cameroons because Foumban was not completely out of risk. Indeed Sultan Seidou and the traditional council of the Bamoum people had always been on the side of legality, but it should be remembered that Felix-Roland Moumie, an indigene, was one of the front leaders of the UPC, and as such, he had even succeeded in introducing the doctrine of the UPC into the Sultan's palace through one Mekou Samuel who was not only a friend but also the private secretary of the Sultan. Even though the Koutaba military camp was there to reassure whoever, the terrorist had proven that they mastered the field and could carry out any audacious attack wherever as was confirmed by the killing of the SDO, Albert Khong at the eve of the conference.

In order to curb the infiltration of terrorists into Bamoum country, a curfew was declared in all the administrative units around Foumban in July 1961. Only vehicles of the administrative authorities, army and police were allowed to move in all of the

Bamileke land. The much publicized tranquillity and serenity and the paradisiacal locality of Foumban was all fake. What really gave Foumban peace at the time of the conference were the totalitarian measures adopted by Ahmadou Ahidjo.

The atmosphere in which the conference was convened was of uninhabited gaiety and celebration. The full splendour of the ancient though relatively recently Islamized kingdom was proudly displayed to the delegates. The entire town had been exquisitely cleaned up and houses plashed with whitewash. There was music provided by two orchestras from Yaounde and Douala. There was more than enough for everyone to eat and drink. Food and reception cocktail parties were lavish and lasting till the early hours of the mornings<sup>810</sup>. Colourful squadron of Bamoum warriors, frenzied and untiring dancers performed regularly with a variety of drums and bush xylophones. These built up a festive façade ill-fitting to the grave body of work the conference was called on to do. According to Nerius Namaso Mbile, Charles Okala, the foreign minister and his secretary Jean Bate Yene who were the brains behind this ambiance wanted to cement the impression that the conference brought together 'brothers' and convince them that despite the stories of murder and fire, there could be at least this island of peace, east of the Mungo<sup>811</sup>. The lavish cocktail that characterized the Foumban conference were certainly not only influenced by the desire to cement the brotherly relations between the two peoples. The main objective was to distract the attention of the Southern Cameroonians and convince them that they were joining a land of plenty.

Besides, Sultan Seidou Njoya wooed the Southern Cameroons delegation further when he decorated Foncha on Thursday July 20, 1961, for meritorious service to the people of Cameroon. The decoration consisted of a beautiful metal necklace with miniature brass human heads and a war sword and scabbard with which leaders returning successfully from important battles in the past were

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<sup>810</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p.262.

<sup>811</sup> Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story*, p.167.

decorated<sup>812</sup>. After the decoration, John Ngu Foncha accompanied by the sultan led a procession of distinguished people among them president Ahmadou Ahidjo through lines of the sultan's bodyguard and warriors who shot guns and chanted war songs, into the inner court of the Palace where he was received by senior members of the sultan's court<sup>813</sup>. The solemnity of the occasion was marked by the playing of the traditional gong for the first time over a period of 50 years, which announced the arrival of a leader from a successful battle.

On the evening of Friday 21, 1961, at the farewell dinner dance party given for delegates at the Prefect's house, Premier John Ngu Foncha was presented with a bronze horseman fully dressed in battle attire and a carved plaque of the Premier by the Foumban community<sup>814</sup>. The decoration and certificate of honour from the king of the Bamum plus the title of *commandeur de l'ordre de la valeur camerounais* which was bestowed on Foncha by Ahidjo in 1959 certainly convinced or re-assured John Ngu Foncha that the future was promising with the Republic of Cameroon.

The actual picture of efforts to cajole the Southern Cameroons delegates at the Foumban constitutional gathering of July 1961 was later presented by Emmanuel Njoya, the then *sous préfet* of Foumban as follows;

Two months before the opening of the conference, the *préfet* Jean-Marcel Mengueme and myself were instructed with the organization of the conference so while waiting for the politicians to come for business, the *préfet* and *sous préfet* had to resolve the tedious problem of accommodation; feeding and transport of delegates as well as animation of Foumban during the five days of the conference. Decent houses, hosting functionaries were requested; big farmers like Laurent Guerpellion, Andre Blanc Trolier and Charles Ock Dopher were solicited and contributed

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<sup>812</sup> Soh, *Dr John Ngu Foncha*, p.158.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid.

<sup>814</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no. 1469, July 24, 1961.

by putting at our disposal either a vehicle or a beautiful house. This local contribution was meagre compared to the huge means that were sent from Yaounde. As I must speak the truth, we cajoled and enticed the Anglophones by our ways of welcoming them. We were given so many things to prepare for the conference with all these things at our disposal we lured the Anglophone.

Ahidjo and Foncha were accommodated in the sultan's palace where the sultan himself took care for them .As concerns the others, we were given a special assignment to blindfold them, so each delegate had a refrigerator in his room, which was always full of champagnes and other assorted drinks. Each big one among them had two refrigerators in his room and a well-made bed with the most beautiful and expensive mattress and beddings. In addition there were two beautiful girls who were assigned to permanently take care of him. That was real corruption....<sup>815</sup>

With this historic and brotherly reception, fanfare, cajoling and distractive atmosphere and “corruption”, the Southern Cameroons delegation could not impress Ahidjo with their initial position. Ahmadou Ahidjo did not hesitate to also make it abundantly clear that he would accept suggestions but that he and his delegation would be the final arbiters of what would be accepted<sup>816</sup>. This statement was at variance with an undertaking he made earlier at Victoria when he said that both parties would negotiate reunification as equals. This was an indication that Ahmadou Ahidjo could not be trusted. John Ngu Foncha who had promised Southern Cameroonians a loose federation was therefore unable to deliver the goods because Ahmadou Ahidjo could not stand by his words. He finally accepted Ahmadou Ahidjo centralized federation with the two federated states.

The federation was to be headed by an executive president rather than a figure –head president with ceremonial powers as proposed by

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<sup>815</sup> *Africa Today*: vol 2, no 002 Tuesday March 7, 2004, p.7

<sup>816</sup> Stark, “Federalism in Cameroon,” p. 112

the Southern Cameroons delegation. The request for a quota of ministerial portfolios for the Southern Cameroons –which would have protected Southern Cameroons autonomy within the federal system, was rejected. The demand for a bi-cameral legislature - a very important means of safe guarding regional interests in a federation was also turned down. On this subject, Ahidjo declared that “the bicameral system in a federation is without doubt, classic, but it is necessary to lighten as much as possible our parliamentary apparatus in relation to the resources at our disposals”<sup>817</sup>.

Other aspirations of the Southern Cameroonians such as dual nationality to Federal Cameroonians and the limitation of the presidential mandate to two terms of five years were all ignored. Several important issues such as the system of financial allocation to the federated states were never raised. It should be recalled that in spite of their experiences in Nigeria, the Southern Cameroons politicians failed to also discuss the system of financial allocation at the Bamenda Preliminary Conference. This was surprising and regrettable because this was one of the principal causes of economic and social backwardness of the Southern Cameroons<sup>818</sup>.

The Southern Cameroons delegation therefore failed to convince and /or impose their constitutional recommendations on Ahmadou Ahidjo and his French experts because of the enticing and cajoling Fomuban atmosphere provided by president Ahidjo, sultan Njoya, minister Charles Okala, *Prefet* Jean- Marcel Mengueme, *Sous Prefet* Emmanuel Njoya and the Bamoum notables and masses.

A major problem which destabilized the Southern Cameroon delegation was the fact that they were seeing, for the first time, Ahidjo’s constitutional package for a strong central government, with only residual powers for the federated States. Overwhelmed by “brotherly sentiments”, the Southern Cameroon delegation ignored their embarrassment and agreed to examine the proposals on the

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<sup>817</sup> Cited in Adener, E, and “The Nature of the Reunification of Cameroon,” in Arthur Hazelewood (ed), *African Integration and Disintegration*, London, Oxford University press, 1967, p. 307.

<sup>818</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, p. 255



spot<sup>819</sup>. As if further to humiliate them, they were obliged to meet in separate sessions from the delegates from the Republic of Cameroon for the five days that they were in Foumban. Under such circumstances there was no serious bargaining. There was too little time and agreement was expected immediately.

Coming so soon after the plebiscite campaigns, the Southern Cameroonian representatives approached the deliberations at the conference from established party positions and relied too little on experts. Moreover, there was complete unanimity in Ahidjo's delegation for a strong central government. In many ways, then, the Foumban Conference was used to pursue the protagonists of a loose federation to accept a strong central government for a united government which was already a *fait accompli*. The conference was therefore Ahidjo's meeting in all intents and purposes as he alone chose the timing and setting, fixed the agenda and summoned the delegates to it.

Besides, the failure to achieve desired objectives at Foumban or reunification in a loose federation could also be attributed to some secret deals between some French Cameroonians and John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna. Before the Foumban conference Foncha and Muna reportedly cut a deal with Ahmadou Ahidjo and his closest associate in which the two Southern Cameroons politicians were promised juicy political appointments following the effective implementation of Ahidjo's constitutional proposals<sup>820</sup>. Almost three weeks before the Foumban conference, commissioners Milne and J.O Fields dispatched confidential reports to their superiors at the Colonial Office in London which gave an accurate account of the post Foumban political careers of John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna as a result of the deal both of them had allegedly, made. In his secret dispatch of July 1, 1961 Milne reported:

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<sup>819</sup>Fon Angwafor , Fon of Mankon, 89years,Mankon, March 7, 2009. He participated in the Foumban Conference.

<sup>820</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroon*, p. 162.

We believe, on very good information that Foncha has already done a deal with Ahidjo the idea being that the present Government of the Republic will become the government of the federation and ... sovereignty will be transferred to it and defence and national security will become federal matters... In return... Foncha has been promised the vice presidency of the federal republic and Muna has been promised a post in the federal cabinet...I am sure the wretched little man is moved very largely by consideration of what is best for himself, the interest of the Southern Cameroon will come a poor second<sup>821</sup>.

Milne's dispatch was followed by another confidential report from J.O Fields dated July 9, 1961 in which he said that Charles Okala had secret talks with Solomon Tandeng Muna and persuaded him to agree that the police and army should be federal subjects on the understanding that Solomon Tandeng Muna would be minister of defence<sup>822</sup>. This was certainly the origin of Ahidjo's claim at the Foumban conference that it was agreed the army and police should be federal<sup>823</sup>. These secret deals certainly became known by the high commissioner because of the cordial relations, which existed between the British and French colonial officials in Buea and Yaounde respectively. The French surely informed the British colonial officials in Buea of the secret negotiations between Ahmadou Ahidjo and John Ngu Foncha since Ahidjo always had French advisers with him during talks with Foncha.

The description of the Foumban conference as presented by Albert Mukong to the President of the OK, Ndeh Ntumazah, also confirmed the secret deals and revealed that at Foumban, Ahidjo continued with efforts to corrupt the Southern Cameroon politicians. According to Albert Mukong, Ahmadou Ahidjo sat in a corner of

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<sup>821</sup> Cited in David N. Njung, "Disunity in West Cameroon Politics: the Case of the Kamerun National Democratic Congress (KNDP) and the Cameroon Peoples National Congress (CPNC), 1961-1966", MA Thesis in History, University of Buea, 1999, p.50.

<sup>822</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p. 162

<sup>823</sup> Njung, "Disunity in West Cameroon politics," p. 51.

one of the conference halls and members of the Southern Cameroon team went in one after the other to lobby for positions. They told Ahmadou Ahidjo what they could do for him and in return received promises of good positions in the new establishment.<sup>824</sup>

The understanding became a reality when after the Foumban talks; John Ngu Foncha became vice president of the Federal Republic of Cameroon and Solomon Tandeng Muna a federal minister. Field in his report of July 9, 1961 also noted that the KNDP executive had agreed that if they could not get reunification on their own terms, obviously a loose federation, they would go back to the UN and demand separate independence within the commonwealth<sup>825</sup>. The Federation was heavily centralized and not loose but the KNDP executive did not go back to the UN. This was because Foncha and Muna (party executives) had been influenced by Ahidjo's promises and readiness to compensate them with lucrative appointments.

The impact of Ahidjo's promises to Foncha and Muna were many. John Ngu Foncha refused to disclose the copy of the draft constitution, which Ahidjo had given him, to his colleagues of the KNDP and the opposition at the Bamenda Constitutional Conference of July 1961. Secondly, in spite of the presence of qualified Southern Cameroons lawyers like Samuel Endeley, Gorji Dinka, Bamela Engo, Emmanuel Tabi Egbe and Attorney –General Mensah, John Ngu Foncha never took them as his advisers to his meetings with Ahmadou Ahidjo or to the Foumban conference<sup>826</sup>. Thirdly, despite pressure from Augustine Ngom Jua, Dr Emmanuel Endeley and Fon Angwafor of Mankon, John Ngu Foncha refused to table to the delegates at Foumban, the proposed draft constitution produced by the Southern Cameroonians at Bamenda.<sup>827</sup> The Southern Cameroons therefore emerged the loser or failed to secure a loose federation at the Foumban constitutional conference because

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<sup>824</sup> Asong, *Ndeb Ntumazah*, p.295.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid, also see Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.163.

<sup>826</sup> Ngoh, *Southern Cameroons*, p.163.

<sup>827</sup> Fon Angwafor, 89years, Traditional Ruler and Politician who attended the Foumban Conference, Bamenda, March 7, 2009.

Ahmadou Ahidjo and his foreign affair minister Charles Okala “bribed” and persuaded John Ngu Foncha and Solomon Tandeng Muna to accept Ahidjo’s constitutional proposals.

If there was corruption at Fumban, it was likely not limited to Foncha and Muna. According to Albert Mukong, Ahidjo received in private almost all the political leaders and the influential chiefs present at the conference. This may explain the enthusiasm with which Mbile and Motomby-Woleta (who had threatened to fight against reunification till the last energy) were ready to have memorable pictures with Ahidjo at Fumban.

**Plate 11: Ahidjo, Motomby-Woleta, Muna and Mbile at the Fumban Conference**



**Source:** NAB, Photo Album

**NOTE:** The smiles on the faces of Motomby-Woleta and Mbile were indications that even the Southern Cameroons opposition was satisfied with the Fumban decisions. This confirms Mukong's post-conference declarations.

Even Dr Emmanuel Endeley did not express any discontent in his speech at Fumban. He even congratulated Sultan Njoya and Ahidjo for the success of the historic conference. All these were indicators that the entire Southern Cameroons delegation was bribed by Ahidjo and his men during the Fumban conference.

In a valediction presented on July 26, 2011 at the University of Yaounde 1, Professor V.G.Fanso challenged the sources of the scholars who claim Foncha had received a draft constitution from Ahidjo before the Fumban Conference. According to Fanso, such a draft constitution would have been in the French language (as it was at Fumban), a language Foncha neither read nor understood. His Assistant Secretary Dr Bernard Fonlon, who could have translated the text because of his mastery of the French language never,

mentioned it during the many times he spoke and wrote on reunification. There is no evidence of the official transmission of such a document between the President of the Republic of Cameroun and the Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons. Fanso wondered why Professor V.G. Ngoh (one of the proponents of the Ahidjo-Foncha deal) did not interview Foncha on the subject before his death in 1999. He went further to indicate that Ngoh's informants (S.T.Muna, N.N.Mbile and Moussa Yaya) could not give credible information because Mbile was against reunification and Moussa Yaya Ahidjo's man. The Ahidjo-Foncha reunification talks should therefore be re-investigated.

## **E. The Question of Insecurity and the Transfer of Sovereignty**

The question of the possibility of a breakdown of internal security in the former Southern Cameroons was very much exploited by all the opponents of reunification. Even during the plebiscite much was made of this point. No doubt the recrudescence of guerrilla activities on the border with the Mungo Division of the Republic of Cameroon occasionally sent a chill down the spines of even some of the most ardent proponents of reunification. Ahidjo and the French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons knew that this point was exploited by many in order merely to scare people away from the path of reunification. The British were active in this domain. They gave the KNC-KPP Alliance the impression that the UPC had planned to invade the Southern Cameroons few days after reunification

However, there were genuine reasons for fear because Kumba remained an important centre for clandestine UPC activities even after the party was officially banned in the Southern Cameroons. Apart from a liaison office established in Kumba to facilitate communication between the underground internal wing of the party fighting the "liberation" war in French Cameroon and the external wing based in Accra and Conakry, Kumba also served as an important transit point for the smuggling of arms from the Island of Fernando-Po to the *maquis* in the Bamileke and the Mungo regions.

In fact, in 1960, a Nigerian army patrol is reported to have seized a large sum of money (£ 11,000) and ammunitions worth about £ 5000 destined for the Republic of Cameroon<sup>828</sup> Kumba also provided bases from which guerrilla raids were occasionally launched in the Mungo and Bamileke Regions. Also a story in the *Sunday Telegraph* of August 6, 1961, reported that British women and children had been evacuated from the territory and that arm and ammunitions had been sent to British residents in the Southern Cameroons for the purpose of protecting themselves against guerrilla invasions following the withdrawal of British troops from the territory on October 1, 1961. Consequently the Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons repeatedly appealed to the British Government to let the British troops stay in the Southern Cameroons after October 1. Substance was given to these fears by the incident that occurred in August 1961.

On August 8, 1961 there occurred an incident which might have been used to bring the whole process of reunification to a standstill if Ahmadou Ahidjo did not once more outwit John Ngu Foncha. On that day and at about twelve noon, a party of approximately thirty armed and uniformed Africans under the command of a European entered the area of Ebudu CDC camp near Tombel-about one and a half miles on the Southern Cameroons side of the frontier-and murdered twelve men, all of whom turn out to be CDC labourers<sup>829</sup>. They were; Ben Anya, John Tah, Thomas Lobe, Alexander Njokom, Maurice Etungwe, Martin Tiwa, Jonas Agbo, Pius Wawa, Daniel Eyambe, Elias Mugo and Esu Iko.<sup>830</sup>

New cartridge cases of French origin were found on the scene. The Nkongsamba military command at first declared that UPC guerrilla fighters were responsible for the massacres but he later admitted there had been an operation in the area south of the border by the security force of the Republic of Cameroon. Inquiries by the Southern Cameroons police and military the same afternoon and written up by a Senior Police Officer in great detail established

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<sup>828</sup> *Daily Times*, September 14, 1960, p.

<sup>829</sup> Malcom Milne, *No Telephone to Heaven*, p.443

<sup>830</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release no1505, p.8.

beyond doubt that the perpetrators were personnel of the Republic of Cameroon's security force probably of the dangerous and ill-discipline *gardes civiques*.

So heinous was the crime that many who opposed reunification because of guerrilla warfare and totalitarian rule in the Republic of Cameroon could have obstructed the October 1, 1961 'marriage'. Ahmadou Ahidjo had to react promptly and cleverly. On the afternoon of August 15, a delegation of two from the Republic arrived unexpectedly in Buea. They said they had been sent on 'a fact-finding mission' by Ahmadou Ahidjo.

The delegation was received by the acting commissioner, Malcolm Milne, who asked them to accept blame, apologize and pay compensation for the crime.<sup>831</sup> The delegation refused to admit guilt and insisted to continue the investigations. The delegation later that afternoon had a private meeting with Foncha and persuaded him to issue a statement part of which read:-

Although there are various versions of the people responsible for this atrocity it is true to say that, at the moment, the facts have not been known. Top level government investigations are being carried out at the spot. The representatives of the government of Cameroon have undertaken to conduct full investigations and make the facts known. We both agreed that whoever is guilty of this cruel murder will be severely punished.<sup>832</sup>

This declaration was followed by a visit to the scene of the crime. Foncha accompanied by Ahidjo's envoys Mr Restand Mvie (Director of the European and African Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Epo Manfred (Representative of the Republic of Cameroon in Buea) and Colonel Blanc (Technical adviser to the minister of defence) arrived the scene on August 15, 1961 and donated £50 to relatives of the victims<sup>833</sup> Speaking at the scene, Mvie Restand promised that the Ahidjo government was going to guarantee their security and do all it can to get and punish the culprits. This

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<sup>831</sup> Malcom Milne, *No Telephone to Heaven*, p.440.

<sup>832</sup> Ibid.

<sup>833</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no1509, p2



consoling promise and the £50 somehow satisfied the disgruntled villagers and other who could have questioned the reunification process due to the incident.

The Republic of Cameroon government did not make any move again into the matter until John Ngu Foncha's next visited Yaoundé which he did on August 23, 1961. They then proposed to him that there should be set up a joint Southern Cameroons, Republic of Cameroon inquiry with the task of establishing, if possible, those responsible and reporting their findings to both governments. Ahidjo came up with this proposal as a device to delay matters until October 1, 1961. Ahmadou Ahidjo therefore succeeded in averting a potential crisis as nothing was heard about this heinous crime after reunification.

Apart from the August 8, 1961 incident, the campaign that was carried out in Cameroon against reunification on the grounds of a possible break down of security found an echo in the editorial of some British newspapers. The newspapers in Britain also dramatized the security situation in the Southern Cameroons after the August 8, 1961 incident that Foncha had to react. On the British press reports about disquiet in the Southern Cameroons, Foncha had this to say;

Of recent, an unwarranted alarm has been raised in the British press about terrorists activities in the Southern Cameroons and very incorrect account have been made by irresponsible agents of certain British newspapers relating particularly to the personal safety of white families in the Southern Cameroons. I wish to deny emphatically that terrorism is sweeping through the Southern Cameroons and to say that the reports originate from disgruntled persona-non-grata who, unaccepted and unable to continue to stay in the Southern Cameroons after unification on October 1, wish to discourage every other person from staying, and to instil doubt in the minds of foreign investors who might be interested in investing in the territory. I call on the British press to adopt a much more responsible approach than their agents in reporting developments and activities in the Southern Cameroons.<sup>834</sup>

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<sup>834</sup> Ibid.

Ahidjo also published the indignation of the Cameroon government and a correspondent in Yaounde reported it in the following words;

The Cameroon Government has denounced “with the greatest energy” the “manoeuvres of London sensational papers”, concerning possible disturbances in the Southern Cameroons when the territory unites with the Cameroon Republic in October. The Cameroon Foreign Ministry alleges that these reports have as their object the creation of “fear psychosis” in order to frighten away foreign capital investment<sup>835</sup>.

Ahidjo and his entire government was therefore actively involved in the efforts of the Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons to counter fears of a possible escalation of terrorism in the territory after the reunification ceremonies of October 1. Foncha and Ahidjo therefore worked together to denounce British propagation of fears of insecurity after reunification.

Two reasons may account for the absence of violence as the British had predicted. First, British authorities did not use severe repressive measures (similar to what the French had done just before and after the May 1955 riots) in trying to restrict the activities of the party or that of its successor, the OK. Instead the OK was allowed greater participation in the politics of the Southern Cameroons. Secondly, many French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons were not UPCists even if they were reunificationists. These long-time residents had grown used to the more peaceful and “constitutional” approach that had characterised political developments in the Southern Cameroons and were therefore against violence. It cannot be denied that the energetic response to guerrilla warfare in French Cameroon and the collaboration between Ahidjo and Foncha also prevented the outbreak of political disturbances in the Southern Cameroons

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<sup>835</sup> Ibid.

Meanwhile, Ahmadou Ahidjo continued to shape the reunification process at the tripartite meeting that was held in Yaoundé from August 5 to 8, 1961. Delegates attended from Britain, from the Republic of Cameroon and from the Southern Cameroons. During this tripartite conference, Foncha's delegation was given the same red carpet treatment reserved for them at Fumban. Foncha was received on alighting from the aircraft by Prime Minister Charles Assale. After inspecting a guard of honour, he was introduced to the members of the cabinet and other dignitaries and later taken to Ahidjo's palace for the meeting.

The tripartite handled six issues. The situation and position of Cameroonians serving in the Nigerian army and police; Civil servants and foreign agents in the Southern Cameroons; Services that were considered to be federal such as customs, ports etc., Nigerian currency that was legal tender in the Southern Cameroons, National defence and security and procedure to be adopted for the transfer of sovereignty.<sup>836</sup> These issues were discussed in the presence of British officials who concluded that "the conversations were cordial and fruitful, and took place in an atmosphere of close cooperation showing the determination of the delegates to assure the harmonious unification of the two territories"<sup>837</sup>

However, from time to time, and as necessary, Foncha and Ahidjo broke off to hold bipartite meetings to deal with matters that had not up to that point been settled between them. Ahidjo certainly continued to persuade Foncha to remain loyal to their reunification entente. They agreed that a federation will come into force on October 1, 1961 with Ahmadou Ahidjo

as President and John Ngu Foncha Vice President. They agreed on a federal legislation of fifty, forty of whom will come from the National Assembly of the Republic and ten from the House of Assembly of the Southern Cameroons<sup>838</sup>.

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<sup>836</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no1497.

<sup>837</sup>Malcom Milne, *No Telephone to Heaven*, p.439.

<sup>838</sup> Ibid, p.439.

To ensure that the resolutions of the tripartite were implemented the way he wanted; Ahidjo sent Solomon Tandeng Muna and Mr N. Black, a high official of the Cameroon Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Lagos to discuss with the federal government of Nigeria the possible transfer to the Cameroon of Cameroonian personnel now serving in the Nigerian army. J.O Field and the Assistant Under-Secretary of the State at the Colonial Office, C. G. Eastwood also accepted to discuss the outcome of the tripartite with the business community in the Southern Cameroons. They informed this community that the friendly agreement reached at Yaounde provided a solution to many of the problems connected with reunification and the orderly establishment of the federation on October 1<sup>839</sup>. The tripartite was therefore a success for Ahidjo as he continued to give the reunified state the shape he desired. It was also a success because he was able to get the British declare that the unified state could be safe.

Satisfied with these decisions or agreements and aware of Foncha's susceptibility to false flattery and his misjudgement of the large number of offers of help he had received; Ahmadou Ahidjo cajoled John Ngu Foncha again by sending an economic mission to the Southern Cameroons. The mission that was carried out at the end of August 1961 had to study the structure of the economy and identify the main differences with that of the Republic of Cameroon<sup>840</sup>.

The mission that arrived in the Southern Cameroons on Friday August 11, 1961 was led by Assoumou and it included Titi (Directeur de contribution direct), Momo (Chef de douane), Kedok (Directeur adjoint des Affaires Economique), Richard (Chef du service du prix) and Giscard D'Estaing (Directeur de l'institut d'Emission)<sup>841</sup> The mission discussed customs, currency matters, income tax, company

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<sup>839</sup>NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no1497

<sup>840</sup> Ibid, p. 444.

<sup>841</sup> NAB, file, Qb/a 1961/5, Visit of Economic Mission from Cameroon Republic, p.1.

tax, the management of the CDC, industrial development and other aspects of the economy of the Southern Cameroons with their counterparts of the territory. The result of the economic mission was not immediate financial assistance for the Southern Cameroons but a recommendation that the reunified Cameroon should join the Franc Zone.

It was highly speculated that the outcome of the findings would be Ahidjo's economic assistance for the territory. These speculations were based on the promises that were made on the eve of the plebiscite. Rather the real objective of the mission was for the envoys to see those areas of the Southern Cameroon economy that could easily be exploited for the benefit of the entire federation. It was in this atmosphere of misdirected optimism that Ahmadou Ahidjo landed in the Southern Cameroons on September 30, 1961 and on October 1, 1961; sovereignty was transferred to Ahidjo rather than to Foncha.

The transfer of sovereignty to Ahidjo rather than to Foncha or Southern Cameroons leadership was the last blow to the Southern Cameroon clamour for independence, especially KNDP sympathizers. From April 1960, Foncha who was forced to rationalize his position regarding the plebiscite questions laid down in the UN to the extent of saying that it was now his wish that the questions should remain as suggested, stated clearly that if the plebiscite vote went in favour of the Republic of Cameroon, then sovereignty should first be transferred to the Southern Cameroons. He went ahead to emphasize that "only after a joint Southern Cameroons and Republic of Cameroon body had determined the shape of a United Cameroon Republic should sovereignty be transferred to it at a date to be agreed".<sup>842</sup> Since this was not in line with Ahidjo's plans, he took care to say nothing that was binding on himself or the Republic. He was particularly non-committal in his remarks regarding timing.

However it was extremely unlikely that the UN would transfer power in the first instance to a Southern Cameroon Government in

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<sup>842</sup> Ibid, p.410.

the absence of agreement by Britain, by the Republic of Cameroon and by all the parties in the Southern Cameroon. Again on March 11, 1960, Foncha faced another difficulty when J.M. Boja left the KNDP bench and crossed to the KNC bench in the Southern Cameroon House of Assembly. By mid-1960, there was the D.N. Frambo affair-the alleged movement of Frambo from the KNDP to the KNC-KPP alliance.<sup>843</sup> Foncha set up a commission of inquiry under J.E. Burke who found out that the allegation that Frambo had been forced at gun-point to sign a letter of resignation from the KNDP was false. On May 17, 1960 Southern Cameroon police ably assisted by Nigerian military units, arrested 27 people and secured large amounts of arms, military clothing and money on a terrorist camp situated just on the Southern Cameroon side of the frontier with the Republic.

With these problems and with pressure from J.O. Field, Foncha, Muna, Jua and Effiom visited Ahidjo in Yaounde between November 10 and 14, 1960 and had long discussions with him. They came back with three very unsatisfactory documents. One addressed to the administering authority and the UN saying that the Southern Cameroon must have its own military force for which training should start immediately. The second was headed "Outline Proposal for a Draft Constitution for a Federal United Kamerun Republic. The third document was a resolution by both sides to implement the proposals in the other two documents."<sup>844</sup>

When they returned from Yaounde, Jua and Effiom felt that they had returned to the position they had taken up after the election of the KNDP government in 1959. Namely immediate reunification is impossible and a period of separate existence must intervene. Jua spoke of a period of separate existence of "at least five years"<sup>845</sup>. Foncha and Muna did not comment on the issue. This was certainly

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<sup>843</sup> For details on the Frambo Affair see Bongfen Chem-Langhëë, "The Frambo Affair". *Revue Science et Technique: Science and Technology Review, Serie Science Humaines/Social Sciences Series*, Vol.IV, No.1-2, January-June 1986, pp.71-77.

<sup>844</sup> Malcom Milne, *No Telephone to Heaven*, p.415.

<sup>845</sup> *Ibid*, p.416.

because they were more interested in the promises made by Ahidjo.<sup>846</sup>

However, whatever Foncha wanted now, the fact remained that in 1959, he had accepted the UN's proposal that sovereignty should be transferred to either Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon. The UN was unlikely, without the agreement of all parties, to vary their previous resolution. Also, Ahidjo had already made several public pronouncements welcoming immediate reunification. There was a strong feeling in the Republic in favour and he could not accept a delay. Therefore if sovereignty was handed to Ahidjo on October 1, 1961 it was because Ahidjo had carefully pushed Foncha and Muna into believing that immediate reunification as conceived by the UPCists (even though he combated UPC for that) was popular and urgent given the precarious economic and security situation in the Southern Cameroons.

Ahidjo therefore arrived in Tiko airport on September 30, 1961 and was greeted by a large crowd and military guards of honour. Later at the airport, President Ahidjo and Vice President Foncha and other dignitaries watched the ceremony of lowering of the Union Jack on Cameroon soil for the last time after flying there for over forty years. The birth of the new nation was heralded with 21 gunshots and the ringing of bells at 12midnight on September 30. This was followed by a speech to the new nation by the President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo. Before that, the then officer administering the territory, Mr. M.N.H.Milne had read a message from Britain's Colonial Secretary to Vice President Foncha and Britain's Ambassador to the Republic, C.E.King had read a message from Her Majesty the Queen of Britain to the President of the Republic.<sup>847</sup> All this took place at a reception given by President Ahmadou Ahidjo to over 200 guests at the Mountain

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<sup>846</sup>However it was also widely believed that the period of separate existence depended on the internal situation in the Cameroon, the speed with which a Southern Cameroon military force could be established and the rate of economic development in the country.

<sup>847</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no1562,

Hotel Buea. Amongst the guests were several dignitaries from East Cameroon who in one way or the other worked for reunification.

The next day, October 1, the hoisting of the flag of the Federal Republic of Cameroon took place all over West Cameroon. In Buea, it was followed by presentations of orders of merit to leading architects of reunification. Amongst the recipients were; Dr. Dibue and Sam Mofor.<sup>848</sup> In Bamenda, the Divisional Officer invited the Prefets of Bafoussam, Dschang, Mbouda and Bafang to the activities and cocktail party. There were similar activities in Wum Mamfe, Nkambe, Victoria and Kumba. The same festivities were organised in the major towns of East Cameroon and there was merry making all over. Ahidjo's presence in Buea and the active participation of French Cameroonians in the independence festivities was an indication that they were satisfied with the outcome of the reunification struggle which they had funded. In his independence-day or reunification-day speech, Ahidjo expressed his wish to all Cameroonians in the following words;

May this day be a day of joy to all Cameroonians who believed in their country, who love their fatherland. In less than two years, they have achieved the two essential objectives which they set for themselves: Independence and Reunification. May this reunification of the national territory be the pledge and the symbol of the unity of our hearts and minds.<sup>849</sup>

Ahidjo also called on his fellow country-men to remain united in order to build a nation that may become a laboratory for an African union which shall assemble together states speaking these two languages. Such a Cameroon according to Ahidjo, should constitute a bridge between these two Africas. Ahmadou Ahidjo dominated the celebrations of Independence Day in Buea as if to conclude that he was one of the principal architects of the reunification of the two Cameroons.

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<sup>848</sup> Ibid

<sup>849</sup> NAB, West Cameroon Press Release, no.1563.



The outcome of the Fouban conference and the nature of the reunification of the Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon were therefore largely determined by Ahmadou Ahidjo and his collaborators. The Southern Cameroons negotiators, especially Prime Minister John Ngu Foncha, were outclassed by French Cameroon negotiators led by Ahmadou Ahidjo.

During the plebiscite, and without concrete negotiations with Ahidjo, Foncha promised the electorate a loose federation that should preserve the identity of the Southern Cameroons. Ahmadou Ahidjo did not believe in a federation and the only compromised he could accept was a centralized federation. All efforts were made to convince, persuade and cajole Foncha into accepting Ahidjo's constitutional proposals. Meticulous arrangements were made to comfort and distract the Southern Cameroons delegation at the Fouban conference.

The real constitutional conference that is the plenary session lasted not more than two hours<sup>850</sup>. Most of the time was spent on speeches, cocktails, fanfare and traditional dancing. Foncha and Muna were promised lucrative appointments if they 'swallowed' Ahidjo proposals. Ahmadou Ahidjo and his French advisers therefore successfully enticed, cajoled and bribed Southern Cameroonians to accept Ahidjo's constitution that created a highly centralized federation much to the chagrin of the Southern Cameroons electorate.

After Fumban, insecurity continued to threaten the reunification process and many Southern Cameroonians who were disappointed with the outcome of the Fumban Conference started questioning the whole idea of reunification. Ahidjo had to intervene time and again to convince the sceptics that the much talked about guerrilla invasion of the territory after October 1 was mere anti-reunification propaganda. These interventions were successful and on October 1, 1961 Southern Cameroons gained independence by reuniting with the Republic of Cameroon. This was the long-time dream of immigrants from French Cameroon.

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<sup>850</sup> Aka, *British Southern Cameroons* p.263.



### General Conclusion

The First World War brought considerable suffering to the colonized peoples of Cameroon. It caused enormous social, economic and political dislocation and inspired increase resistance to Imperial institutions. Germany lost Cameroon and all its other African possessions to the Allies. Britain and France survived the war as the world's two largest overseas colonial powers. These two powers dominated the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 during which the question of restituting the lost German colonies was opposed. These colonies were placed under the supervision of a newly created League of Nations. The partitioned Cameroon was given to Britain and France as Mandates within a framework of international accountability rather than as colonies under national sovereignty.

Cameroon was given to Britain and France as a class "B" Mandate. It was on these terms that both powers obtained confirmation on their partition of German Cameroon in 1922. Whereas the British merged the administration of their sector with that of Nigeria, the French considered their own sector for administrative purposes as an Overseas Department of France *outré-mer*. administratively; France did not bring Cameroon officially into French Equatorial Africa. Once in place, the mandate system represented the changing character of post war European imperialism in Africa.

However, while the British considered the mandates as the expression of the very best intentions of British imperialism, their French counterparts considered mandates as danger to the intentions of French imperialism in Africa. Despite its flaws, mandates contributed to an evolution in the culture of colonialism that affected not only the vast diplomatic and colonial bureaucracies of both Britain and France with all the mandated territories as well. Again in

Cameroon, it cemented the joint occupation of the territory and its partition.

If the partition was cemented, the Africans did not see the boundary as divisive because the pre-colonial concept of boundary in Cameroon was fluid and permeable. This concept of fluid boundary was different from the Anglo-French concept of a geometric boundary which separated the intervening lands and people, into distinct entities under different political sovereignties. This alien concept of a boundary was what sparked off disregard for the Anglo-French frontier in Cameroon.

In the first place, the partition shattered the unity of a people after close to 32 years under a common German administration. The Germans had built the foundation of a Cameroon state by establishing its boundaries and putting its inhabitants under the same administration with a good communication network, plantations and schools which fostered a sense of a common political destiny. However, the partition of Cameroon in 1916 and the re-organization of the territory thereafter would have meant very little to the Cameroonians had they been consulted and had other things remained equal.

But, they were not. The Cameroonians were not consulted and the Anglo-French frontier paid scant attention to the interests and rights of the Africans. This became all the more glaring when the “picot-line” drawn as the provisional boundary was artificial at almost every point. It cut across ethnic groups, kingdoms, villages, families, farmland, plantations, fishing and hunting grounds of the border peoples like the Tikar, Bamileke, Balong, Mbo, Balondo, Bakossi and Mungo. These groups had shared a common culture and similar historical experiences. They shared traditions of origins, possessed the same socio-political and economic institutions, adhered to the same religious beliefs and had been exposed to a remarkably similar degree of contact with the outside world. The Anglo-French partition of these peoples was distressful as each fraction was placed in an area of jurisdiction of two distinct and new socio-economic and political systems far removed from the original cultural whole.

After the partition, the British and the French installed their administration on their respective spheres of the territory. Differences in European colonial administrative heritage tended to pull the Cameroonians apart. The most remarkable difference was administrative practices especially the use of the chieftaincy institution. While the British consciously attempted to adapt their method of governance to indigenous rule and customs, the French displayed relatively little compunction in dismissing chiefs whom they disliked. This and other French colonial policies such as the forced labour, *prestation*, *indigénat*, police harassment, *laissez-passer*, high taxes, conscription and de-germanisation pushed many to escape to the more liberal British Southern Cameroons. The migrations to the Southern Cameroons were not only due to political persecutions but also because economic conditions in the territory were also attractive with employment and trade opportunities.

Since differences in colonial policies were glaring, each colonial administration decided to protect its human and economic potentials by hardening border controls. This led to the imposition and use of passports, *laissez-passer*, travel permits, custom posts, police, gendarmes and frontier guards on both sides of the boundary. The situation further frustrated the traditional rights of border peoples and the Africans in general who had moved from one plantation to another, one mission station or school to another and from one trade centre to another during the German administration without difficulties. The consequence was resistance in the form of smuggling and cross border migrations from French Cameroon to the Southern Cameroons where conditions were relatively favourable.

The favourable conditions in the Southern Cameroons included job opportunities in the plantations and the Tiko, Victoria-Bota ports, availability of fertile volcanic soils for large scale farming in Kumba and Victoria Divisions, trade opportunities in Bamenda, Tiko, Buea and Kumba and the general better working and living conditions in the territory. These were therefore the pull factors of French Cameroonian migrations to the Southern Cameroons during the interwar years. Once in the *Zone Anglaise*, these immigrants became

plantation labourers, smugglers, farmers, teachers, traders, hunters, sawyers, clerks, domestic servants and so on

In order to maintain contact with their ethnic bases and confront the host authorities with their problems, these immigrants organized themselves in associations and tribal unions. The Bamileke from the Bamboutous started the Bamenyam Improvement Union which later transformed into the Bamileke Union for all the Bamileke in the Southern Cameroons. The Bassa, precisely those from the Babimbi District grouped themselves under the *Solidarité Bassa de Babimbi*. The Duala led by Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue started the French Cameroon Welfare Union as a club for Duala immigrants and it later brought together all French Cameroonians in the Southern Cameroons.

The grievances that these associations handled included: land disputes, scholarship problems, and non-employment of French Cameroonians, excessive border controls and the disenfranchisement of French Cameroonians. These grievances featured on the many petitions addressed to the UN and or British authorities. Many of these problems especially those related to frontier regulations and the franchise were not given adequate attention by the colonial authorities. French Cameroon immigrants therefore got involved in the politics of the territory with the hope to free themselves from the status of “strangers”.

The political option that could put an end to the frontier and franchise problems was the reunification of the two Cameroons. Although reunification was first proposed by Soppo Priso's *Rassemblement Camerounais* in 1947, it was the FCWU of Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue that made the option known when they presented a formal petition on reunification to a UN Visiting Mission in Kumba in 1949. Apart from eliminating the frontier barriers and acquiring the franchise, French Cameroonians sowed the seed of reunification because they were overwhelmed with the British liberal system.

In 1949, the reunification idea was sold to the Southern Cameroonians when Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, Raphael Nana and other association leaders joined the CNF on the reunification platform. When the leader of the CNF, Dr Emmanuel Endeley

became reluctant to give French Cameroonians the franchise and to pursue reunification, Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue led French Cameroonians out of the CNF and founded a more vibrant and enthusiastic reunification movement, the KUNC in 1951. Under the leadership of Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, Joseph Henry Ngu and Lucas Ayisi. French Cameroonians intensified conferences and contacts with the UPC in French Cameroon between 1951 and 1952 in favour of reunification. Meeting in Kumba, Tiko and Eseka, the KUNC and the UPC set up an alliance to work for the reunification of the two Cameroons. During the Eseka, Um Nyobe made it clear to the delegates that reunification was inevitable because according to him “*Chrétienement parlant, tout le monde reconnaîtra que Dieu a créé un seul Cameroun*”.

At home, in the Southern Cameroons, KUNC branches were set up in almost all the towns hosting French Cameroon settlers. The KUNC leaders petitioned the boundary regulations and the disenfranchisement of French Cameroonians recommending reunification as the solution. French Cameroonians could therefore be credited for initiating and propagating the idea of reunification in the Southern Cameroons.

Immediately the reunification idea was implanted, political parties took up the debate on the pros and the cons of reunification. French Cameroonians again played a key role in these debates within the various parties. First, Dibongue reconciled his differences with Dr Emmanuel Endeley because he was in need of someone of immense political clout in the Southern Cameroons in order to be shielded from the British colonial authorities. Endeley also desperately needed the votes of French Cameroonians and was ready to flirt with reunification. This reconciliation gave birth to the KNC with reunification as its main objectives. This was a victory for Dibongue, chairman of the KNC, the French Cameroonians and the reunification movement because they successfully shifted the issue of reunification from the periphery to the very heart of Southern Cameroon politics.

Unfortunately the marriage between Endeley and French Cameroonians was short lived. Endeley proved unable to dilly-dally

or toy with the idea of reunification pushing these reunificationists to quit the KNC. He also refused to give the franchise to these settlers. Determined to secure an indigenous leadership and an indigenous reunification movement, French Cameroonians especially UPC militants conceived the KNDP in Kumba in 1955 and got John Ngu Foncha to become its leader. The KNDP was therefore launched in Bamenda in 1955 as an indigenous reunification movement. French Cameroonian intellectuals and business class decided to provide the much needed fuel for the KNDP propagation of the reunification idea.

Soppo Priso and the UPCists provided the funds for the vehicle and a printing machine. Simon Joseph Epale in two monographs with S.A. George and E.T. Egbe propagated pro-reunification literature. Godfrey Dibue convinced leading Southern Cameroonians like S.T. Muna and V. E. Mukete to join the KNDP while Sinju Paul mobilized the petty traders as KNDP sympathizers. French Cameroonians and their drive for reunification were therefore responsible for the mortal split between the KNC and KNDP in 1955.

When the UPC refugees arrived in the Southern Cameroons in May 1955, the reunification debate gained a new momentum. Many French Cameroonians, who were impatient with Foncha, endorsed the UPC idea of immediate reunification. UPC branches were rapidly set up in Tiko, Buea, Kumba, Victoria and Bamenda. In 1957 the UPC was outlawed and French Cameroonians led by Joseph Innocent Nkamsi immediately sponsored Ndeh Ntumazah to start the OK. Petitions from French Cameroonians within the UPC and OK between 1955 and 1959 gradually convinced the UN that reunification was a popular alternative for Southern Cameroons independence.

Therefore if reunification featured as one of the 1961 plebiscite alternatives, it was because the French Cameroonians (and their agents like Ndeh Ntumazah) kept the idea alive within the political parties and at the UN through petitions. British attitude also favoured the cause of reunification. Although Britain was no lover of reunification, she did not oppose reunification as one of the



plebiscite alternatives because this appeared to be the easiest way for her to achieve her goal of creating a grand Nigeria. British calculations were based on the logical assumption that Southern Cameroonians would never vote for reunification owing to the hostility of the population towards the UPC and reunification, and fear of the anarchy and bloodshed that the guerrilla war of liberation in the French Cameroon was causing.

When the plebiscite became inevitable, French Cameroonians who had no authority or position in government but who were an interested party were either persecuted by the proponents of integration with Nigeria or wooed by the proponents of reunification with French Cameroon. Endeley's government and the British colonial authorities intimidated and persecuted them in several ways. They were refused the franchise, overtaxed, deported, detained, tortured and excluded from indigenous associations and institutions.

When Foncha became premier in 1959, he wooed French Cameroonians. They were granted jobs, promotions, scholarships and the freedoms of expression and association. Reunificationists in French Cameroon such as Paul Soppo Priso, Sultan Seidou Njoya and Ahmadou Ahidjo moved in to the Southern Cameroons to convince their "brothers" to choose reunification. Ahidjo's visit in particular was timely and his declarations comforting. Many who listened to him in Tiko, Buea, Victoria, and Kumba in 1960 were convinced that reunification was not annexation and that it was going to be negotiated on equal bases. He also dispelled the rumour propagated by the CPNC that French Cameroon was to take the Southern Cameroons into the French Community. Ahidjo's presence and declarations in the Southern Cameroons in July 1960, therefore wooed many sceptics who feared reunification.

Fortunately for these French Cameroon diehard reunificationists, the UN included reunification as one of the plebiscite alternatives. The conduct of the plebiscite itself enabled many French Cameroonians resident in the Southern Cameroons and others who crossed the borders at the eve, to vote for reunification. Their "illicit" votes inflated the scores in favour of reunification especially in the Bamenda, Victoria and parts of the Kumba Division.

With the plebiscite results in favour of reunification, Ahmadou Ahidjo presented his true ambitions. He exploited Foncha's naivety and British abnegation to impose a centralized federation on Foncha and the Southern Cameroonians. During the various Foncha-Ahidjo pre-plebiscite meetings to discuss the constitution of a united Cameroon, Ahidjo carefully excluded the British and or the UN authorities and gave the impression that he and his government favoured the Southern Cameroons proposed loose federation. In October, 1960 Foncha and Ahidjo agreed to set up a federation out of the French Commonwealth. After the plebiscite, Ahidjo simply revised the constitution of the Republic of Cameroon and presented the draft to Foncha. The Ahidjo's constitution proposed a centralized federation rather than a loose federation or confederation promised by Foncha and the KNDP during the plebiscite campaigns. Ahidjo in a secret undertaking with Foncha and Muna promised them lucrative positions in the federation if they recommended his proposed centralized federation to the Southern Cameroonians.

The delegation from the Southern Cameroons at the Foumban Constitutional Conference, July 1961 was therefore helpless when they were presented with a *fait accompli*. Furthermore the French Cameroonians host of the conference distracted and wooed them with the beautiful site, cheerful and brotherly Bamoum people, fanfare and entertainment which characterized the conference. Despite their numerical superiority, aspirations and experience in constitutional conferences, the Southern Cameroonians modified very few clauses of the Ahidjo's draft constitution. The Southern Cameroons therefore gained independence on October 1, 1961 as the state of West Cameroon in the highly centralized Federal Republic of Cameroon much against the promises made by Foncha and the aspirations of the majority of the Southern Cameroonians. However the French Cameroonians who initiated, propagated and sustained the reunification idea in the Southern Cameroons were satisfied because the frontier regulations and the franchise issue were expected to become problems of the past.

This study therefore complements previous research on the independence and reunification struggles in the British Southern

Cameroons. Chem-Langhëë, Le Vine, Amaazee, Aka and others concluded that the driving force behind the Pan-Cameroon Movement or the reunification struggle in the Southern Cameroons was the British neglect of the socio-economic development of the territory and the resultant Igbophobia amongst the victim population. This study reveals that the British neglect of the territory and Igbophobia notwithstanding, reunification was carefully conceived by French Cameroonians who wanted the franchise and the elimination of frontier regulations. They propagated the idea and convinced Southern Cameroonians like Foncha, Muna, Mukong, Mukete and Ntumazah to join them. They also invited the elite from their ethnic base in French Cameroon to support or sponsor it. The support and sponsorship were provided and reunification triumphed During the 1961 plebiscite. During the negotiations on the form of the state or constitution for a United Cameroon, French Cameroonians led by Ahmadou Ahidjo and his minister Charles Okala grossly outwitted the Southern Cameroonians led by Foncha and his minister Muna. The reunification process and the nature of the federation as adopted in Foumban in July 1961, was therefore the handiwork of French Cameroonians.

This conclusion seems to undermine the opinion that developed in the 1990s that reunification was an undesirable and an unfortunate occurrence. Reunification came to be represented as villainy, a plague, an albatross around people's necks, and a none-too-heroic act. Against a background of incessant Anglophone agitation for a return to federation or secession from the union, some alleged that Anglophone Cameroonians were those who had conceived the reunification idea. One influential opinion, championed by Charles Assale (the first Prime Minister of the Federated State of East Cameroon), and popularized in *le Temoin, le Patriote*, and the Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV), held that reunification was essentially an Anglophone affair.<sup>851</sup> They concluded that Ahmadou Ahidjo was never interested in reunification. They pointed to history:

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<sup>851</sup> Awasom, "The Reunification Question in Cameroon History: Was the Bride an Enthusiastic or a Reluctant One? *Africa Today*, vol47, no2, 20002, p.16.

French Cameroon became independent without reunification and assumed sovereignty on January 1, 1960 to become the Republic of Cameroon and a member of the United Nations. The 1961 United Nations plebiscites, which resulted in the Cameroon union, did not involve the Republic of Cameroon, as British Cameroonians chose either to join Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon. Of their own accord, Anglophones unilaterally opted to achieve independence by joining the Cameroon Republic.

This opinion was therefore erroneous because our study has revealed that French Cameroonians were the flag bearers who initiated reunification and set up the first reunification movement called the KUNC. In the 1950s, they successfully made reunification the central objective of the KNC and KNDP platform. They imposed it on the reluctant Anglophones by convincing the UN to propose it as one of the plebiscite alternatives. When this happened, Ahidjo used Foncha to force it through the throat of the Anglophones. It may therefore be fair to conclude that in the 1961 “marriage”, the “bridegroom” (French Cameroon by virtue of its size which was ten times the area of the British Southern Cameroons, its population which was four times that of the Southern Cameroons and its immeasurable greater resources and a much higher level of social and economic development) was more enthusiastic than the “bride” (Southern Cameroons).

On the other hand, Some Anglophones also took advantage of political developments during the Second Cameroon Republic particularly in the 1990s to claim that reunification was the affair of Southern Cameroonians only. They were limiting the reunification saga to the plebiscite. According to this group, the people of Southern Cameroon, through a United Nations plebiscite, decided to enter a political union with the people of *La République du Cameroun*, whom they considered as their brothers and fellow countrymen. “They did so, by the grace of God, freely and without the involvement or participation of the people of *La République du*

*Cameroun*”<sup>852</sup> This group of Anglophones or Southern Cameroonians was also mistaken because we have seen that the majority of the people in the territory wanted an independent Southern Cameroon but unfortunately the UN plebiscite did not offer them the opportunity to opt for a separate Southern Cameroon state. The KNDP heavily financed by Francophone Bamileke and Douala interest groups, skilfully manipulated the electorate during the plebiscite campaigns into believing that reunification meant “home rule” for the Southern Cameroons from Buea. Some Southern Cameroonians who voted for reunification in 1961 thought that they were voting for the independence of the Southern Cameroons as Foncha and the KNDP had promised. Therefore it can be concluded that they did not freely choose reunification because they were manipulate and influenced by French Cameroonians who were an interested party.

Some of the French Cameroonian reunificationists were compensated by the powers that be after reunification. Intellectuals like Dibue, Epale, Monekosso, Nasah, Bamela Engo and Pondi were given lucrative appointments with the civil service. For example, Dibue became the Director of Public Health for West Cameroon. Businessman Sinju Paul was confirmed as mayor of Tiko by the KNDP West Cameroon Government in 1962 and he occupied the post to about 1975. In fact, in 1969 he was privileged as Mayor of Tiko to welcome Ahidjo to his municipality during the inauguration of the Mungo Bridge linking West and East Cameroon through the Tiko-Douala or Reunification road.<sup>853</sup> Ahidjo later ordered Mr. Njiki, the Regional Director of *Banque Centrale* for West Cameroon to grant

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<sup>852</sup> This opinion is expressed in, All Anglophone Conference (AAC 1), *All Anglophone Conference: The Buea Declaration*, 2 and 3 April 1993, Limbe, Nooremac Press.

<sup>853</sup> In his welcome speech, Sinju proposed that there should be no tariffs paid for crossing the Mungo Bridge as was the case with the Wouri Bridge since General de Gualle had given the funds for the construction of the Bridge. He argued that such toll might discourage certain people from West Cameroon from crossing to Douala and this might impair national integration. President Ahidjo responded positively to this proposal.

him a loan of 300,000,000 to enable him boost his business.<sup>854</sup> This interest free loan was certainly a form of compensation paid to a man who sacrificed much for the reunification of the two Cameroons

Ahidjo more than Foncha, was internationally credited with the successful reunification of the two Cameroons. In 1972, the University of Lagos claimed when conferring an Honorary Doctor of Law degree on Ahidjo that;

...having achieved Independence for what was then the East Cameroon, you turned your intensive diplomatic campaign at the United Nations to have a referendum conducted in that part of the Cameroons under British trusteeship. The result was the reunification of East and West Cameroon...<sup>855</sup>

It was not an academic error for crediting Ahidjo with what many considered the achievements of Foncha. It was in fact tribute to someone who at the last minute confiscated a struggle which he had long opposed.

The revelations of this study notwithstanding, the 1961 reunification of the British Southern Cameroons and the former French Cameroon was an extraordinary event as people of different colonial backgrounds decided to form a single state. It presented a counter current in postcolonial Africa to the prevailing trend of the balkanization of old political unions or blocs. The British and French Cameroons had been administered separately by Britain and France since 1916 and reunified against the expectations and manoeuvres of the metropolitan powers in 1961.

Reunification was therefore perceived as the greatest achievement and the apotheosis of African nationalist struggles par excellence<sup>856</sup>.

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<sup>854</sup> Soh, *Paul Sinju, The Business Tycoon*, p.130. Ahidjo later granted him the exclusive right to import rice and wheat flour in to Cameroon for six months.

<sup>855</sup> Cited in Aka, *British Southern Cameroons*, and p.266.

<sup>856</sup> Many scholars including Professor Bernard Fonlon could not resist idealizing united Cameroon as the crucible of African unity. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) rewarded the Cameroon nation for its peculiar Pan-African

Unfortunately only Ahmadou Ahidjo and John Ngu Foncha stood tall as architects of reunification a few decades after the union. The flag bearers or initiators of reunification like Robert Jabea Kum Dibongue, Lucas Ayisi and Joseph Henry Ngu and the promoters and propagators of the idea like Godfrey Dibue, Joseph Simon Epale, Boniface Nasah, Joseph Innocent Nkamsi, Sultan Seidou Njoya, George Mbaraga, Paul Sinju, Felix Roland Moumie, Paul Soppo Priso and many others were ignored.

It is therefore clear that reunification remains an intriguing question in Cameroon history and a succession of scholars will continue to revisit it in the light of their own idiosyncrasies. As Awasom puts it, reunification will remain an inexhaustible source of elephant meat for interested scholars to have their own share.

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posture by naming two Secretary Generals from Cameroon: Nzo Ekanghaki (1972-1974) and Willaim Eteki Mboumoua (1974-1978).





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|                  | Age | Status                    | Place   | Date             |
|------------------|-----|---------------------------|---------|------------------|
| Achidi Achu      | 84  | Politician                | Santa   | January 10,2009  |
| Asong , Linus    | 65  | writer                    | Bamenda | March 9,2008     |
| Angwafor (chief) | 81  | Politician                | Bamenda | August 8, 2010   |
| Che, Robert      | 75  | Retired Police Inspector  | Bamenda | March 10, 2008   |
| Dibongue, Julie  | 69  | Wife of R.J.K. Dibongue   | Buea    | March 23, 2010   |
| Ekobena          | 91  | Retired Worker            | Buea    | March 22, 2010   |
| Ayeka, J.E.      | 90  | Retired Clerk             | Limbe   | March 12, 2008   |
| Foncha, Anna     | 89  | Foncha's Wife             | Bamenda | January 8. 2009  |
| Mukete, V.E.     | 89  | Politician                | Kumba   | December 4. 2009 |
| Musa, Njoya      | 92  | Retired Worker            | Ndop    | January 6. 2009  |
| Ngu, Bernadette  | 70  | Daughter of J.H. Ngu      | Kumba   | March 4, 2010    |
| Ngu, Maggie      | 68  | Daughter of J.H. Ngu      | Buea    | March 5, 2010    |
| Nasah, B.T.      | 86  | Retired Medical Professor | Buea    | October 24, 2009 |
| Monekosso,       | 82  | Retired                   | Buea    | January 12,      |

|                   |    |                                     |         |                   |
|-------------------|----|-------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| G.L.              |    | Minister                            |         | 2010              |
| Ngebius, William  | 88 | Retired Politician                  | Kumba   | March 4, 2010     |
| Njikam Alex       | 88 | Cocoa Farmer                        | Kumba   | March 4, 2010     |
| Ngwa, Ade         | 83 | Retired Administrator               | Bamenda | January 7, 2009   |
| Nchinda, Andreas  | 88 | Trader                              | Bamenda | January 12, 2009  |
| Endeley, Samuel   | 84 | Retired Chief Justice               | Buea    | August 7, 2002    |
| Lioyuk, Lucas     | 90 | Farmer                              | Limbe   | November 7, 2008  |
| Tagu, Isidore     | 87 | Trader                              | Buea    | March 16, 2008    |
| Tamfu, Fidelis    | 88 | Trader                              | Bamenda | March 11, 2008    |
| Soh, P.B.         | 72 | Retired Teacher                     | Bamenda | August 7, 2010    |
| Wandj, Peter      | 80 | Cocoa Farmer                        | Tombel  | December 10, 2010 |
| Sinju, Clementine | 68 | Paul Sinju's Wife                   | Tiko    | January 10, 2010  |
| Atem, George      | 71 | Historian                           | Buea    | January 24, 2010  |
| Langsi Ferdinand  | 74 | Retired Teacher                     | Bamenda | Jan.11, 2009      |
| Lantum Daniel     | 75 | Professor Emeritus of Public Health | Kumbo   | Jan.6, 2009       |
| Nyamboli Thomas   | 85 | Notable                             | Bamenda | Jan11, 2009       |
| Ndeh Chi Simon    | 65 | Ntumazah's collaborator             | Bamenda | March 10, 2010    |
| Mbah Clement      | 72 | Dentist                             | Bamenda | March 11, 2010    |
|                   |    |                                     |         |                   |

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